The Sputnik Story by Tony James

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This is the story of Sigue Sigue Sputnik...

...Well, in fact, what's written here is my personal story. The others in the band all played their parts and in no way would I want to denigrate their individual contributions and talents. But this is my journey, the ups and downs, the dreams and the disappointments, the successes and the failures, the things I saw and just as importantly, the things I never saw along the way.

I tried to create a great rock and roll band but ended up creating a monster that was more about the hype than the music, more about the visuals than the musical genius... and that - as we all know - is not the essence of rock and roll. As we all should know, rock and roll is ALL about the music.

Even so, I think we created something extraordinary, something unique, and took it all the way to number one. The music business is a scary, uncaring, uncompromising beast that sucks your blood and eats your soul the minute you drop your guard. But for one glorious moment in time we were the hottest, most outrageous, most talked about group in the world.

Let me try to tell you how that feels...

[Begin...]

It started in 1981. My previous band, Generation X, had finally disintegrated after the third album. I'd been a musician ever since I left University in 1975 and knew I could never have considered any other career.

Generation X had been my entire focus for as long as I could remember, even if there had been a few changes in the line up since the brilliant guitarist Derwood and Keith Moon style drummer Mark Laff had left the classic original line up in 1979..

There was a time in 1980, when we were recording the **Kiss Me Deadly** album, when the band had been reduced to just me, Billy and drummer **Terry Chimes from The Clash** that we had this mad idea - to merge **Gen X** and the **Pistols** to form a punk supergroup. We even rehearsed one day that week in Air Studios, with me playing with 2 drummers, **Chimes** and **Paul Cook, Billy** and **Steve Jones** (who had just played rhythm guitar on our new single **Dancing with Myself).** We played about 10 tracks, a mixture of Generation X and Pistol's songs. Now **that** group had a big beat giving me a glimpse of what fun it was to play with two drummers. I guess it was one of those drink-fuelled 'wouldn't it be great if kind of moments'. Imagine the ego nightmare! It was contractually impossible of course, and everyone else involved -- from our record company to their manager **Fatchner O'Kelly** (who managed Cook and Jones as **"The Professionals",** but who was also the former manager of the **Boomtown Rats**) -- freaked out. But it was a hell of a day.

Sadly Billy and I could not agree on the merits of dangerous drugs as a passport to credibility. I have seen too many times that heroin destroys everything that gets in it's path, from work to friendships to lives. In this case it left me and Billy on two different planets... and then, almost from one day to the next, it was all over. **Billy** left the band to write his solo album in New York with the manager who I had brought in during the final year of **Gen X** to 'save' the band. **Bill Aucoin,** the former manager of **Kiss** would steer Billy's solo career on to international success but Billy had left without even taking the time to say goodbye, and I was faced with an emptiness, an awful feeling of loss that I had never known before in my life, like losing a first love and your family all at the same time. The group had been my everything for almost six years, now -- just like that -- it was over and I was completely alone, no manager, no record company and worst of all, no band.

I didn't see or hear from Billy again for more than a year until one day, completely out of the blue, he rang me saying he was back in London and could he come round. He brought with him a white label 12" of a new track he'd just finished for his first album. The track was called **"White Wedding"** and it sounded so great I was completely thrown.

Or was that completely jealous? Whatever it was I knew I had a lot of work to do if I was going to catch up with my ex-band mate.

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The creation of Sigue Sigue Sputnik began slowly. I knew I had to come up with something pretty spectacular to compete with what Billy was doing but I also knew I didn't want to form just another punk band. I had the seeds of an idea but for a long time that was all it was.

It was Billy that had discovered the band **Suicide** when we were still together in Gen X, turning up one day at my house dressed in his new image of rubber stockings and tail coat, playing the Suicide track **Frankie Teardrop.** I'd never heard anything like it and it set me thinking that there was a whole other way to create the sound of rock and roll, using electronic beats, and this track became was to become the central influence to the core sound of Sputnik right from the start.

I had recently moved in with my new girlfriend **Magenta DeVine,** at that time working as a publicist with **Tony Brainsby. Magenta** was to become my partner in crime and muse and there were many, many nights when we lay awake in bed agonising over who was right for the lineup in the new band that was slowly forming in my head, and how we would get that band together or, to put it another way, where to find the essence of rock and roll? How to get it right as I had seemingly so effortlessly the first time around in **Generation X.**

The bedroom where we lay contemplating the future, looked exactly as it had done when the former tenant, **Sid Vicious** had vacated it. Black floor, black carpet, black walls, black ceiling and black-out windows, let's just say Sid had a problem with light and whatever else was going on with him, that kid certainly had style. Magenta and I found it womb-like and Sid's lingering presence just added to the sense of rock and roll magic as we talked long into those night.

Magenta was an essential part in the creation of Sputnik. She was the real thing, effortlessly stylish, even in those days, before we all became larger than life, with her black hair cut in a Betty Page type bob, her lips always Magenta red and the ubiquitous dark glasses. But she also embodied rock and roll,sometimes a little bit too much, her taste and influence on me in those days was invaluable and I owe her a great deal.

I was still absolutely convinced that I wanted to do something completely different, I didn't just not want to not go back to the old scene, I wanted to form a whole **new** scene... but what did that mean? A daunting thought. I was reading lots of **Colin Wilson** at the time and believed we could influence our future if we wanted it enough. There were several false starts along the way as I was tempted by various friends to take the obvious, easy route and form a new punk band.

There was a three month stint working with **Stiv Bators from the Dead Boys** with the formation of **Lords of the New Church.** I actually wrote what is considered to be one of their best songs called **Russian Roulette.** If you take a look at the song credit on the label you'll see it's credited to James / Chimes although I wrote it all (and get the royalties of course) because most people assumed that it was **Brian James,** the guitarist with **The Damned.** In fact **Stiv** and I got on really well and I wrote more tracks like "Magick" which he used on his solo album. I still can't believe he's dead, killed in a car accident in Paris, such a terrible waste. In my heart though I knew **The Lords** were retreading a journey I had already been on. I still have a live tape of those first rehearsals...

I played bass with **Terry Chimes** on drums, on an album for **The London Cowboys** with some old friends **Barry Jones** and **Steve Dior** from the very early **London SS** days...

[Continue...]

There were the sessions when I produced the group **Sex Gang Children.** I loved the name (I found out later it was **Malcolm Mclaren's** idea, damn him, he was always to haunt me with great ideas!). We recorded their first album in a studio out in the country in Farnham called **Jacobs.** I indulged in my "great **producer"** fantasies making them record in candle light, attacking the microphones with power drills, spray canning huge murals on the walls to create atmosphere. It was the **Guy Stevens** school of producing. **Ian Hunter** had told me years before, when he was producing Generation X's second album, that when Guy had produced **Mott the Hoople** in the 70's that one evening in **Wessex studios** they were doing a take and looked in the control room to see Guy smashing chairs up and even trying to smash the control room glass. It was to create that magic, to create atmosphere that somehow goes into the music that touches the listener - true Rock and Roll. Aaaah the fantasy - but great lessons nevertheless....

Andreas the singer and I still speak a lot... but really, I never liked being a producer of other bands. I wanted my own band, my own fantasy, my own movie where I could write the script, and like **Tarantino,** I could be in my own movie too! I had a lot more dreaming to do yet.

3 Pindock Mews in **Maida Vale,** the house that Magenta had bought from **Malcolm McLaren** when **Sid Viscious** had died, became the centre of madness for the next six years. **Steve Jones** stayed there for a while and we did some recording together but Steve was too scary for me in those days, a bit TOO out there. I remember him turning up one day in a really beaten up, old, black BMW. He'd been stopped by the police the night before and arrested for drinking and driving and having no tax or insurance on the car. As soon as he was released the next morning, he got back in the car a drove round to see me. I admired the ethos but didn't especially want to live the life.

What I knew was that Steve had the most incredible taste in music, even then, show him a record collection and he would pick out all the hits, I mean, straight away select the BEST track on the album, eclectic, wide ranging, from Frank Sinatra to Iron Butterfly, he just had this instinct and you can still see that today on his radio slot in L.A. Steve, cleaned up but still fabulous has become a huge success in L.A. and he deserves it all because he is the real thing.

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I also became friends with an old hero, **Johnny Thunders** formerly of the **New York Dolls** and **the Heartbreakers.**

Thunders just turned up at our door one day with **Jerry Nolan** and asked if I wanted to play with them that night. You bet I did!! It was a dream come true for me, I get to play "Personality **Crisis"** legitimately with the person who wrote it. We learnt 30 songs that afternoon in Magenta's sitting room... Later that evening I turned up at the gig in Victoria, **the Venue,** and waited....and waited.... and waited. When, some two hours later, three friends carried **Thunders** in unconscious and laid him out on the dressing room floor, it struck me that a real life Rock n Roll nightmare was happening before my very eyes.

I somehow got to join the Thunders band. There was me Johnny, **Jerry Nolan** (also from the Dolls - wow!) who was such a brilliant drummer and various rhythm guitarists who came and went. **Steve New** who had played with the **Rich Kids,** and who played the lead guitar part on the **Gen X** track "Dancing **with Myself"** played with us one night and did a great photo session with us too. (actually now I come to think of it I can't begin to imagine what a heroin nightmare the recording sessions for "Dancing **with Myself "** must have been for the producer **Keith Forsey** who had turned up that day in brand new shiny punk gear, all leather trousers and **Anarchy T- shirt,** only to find Idol, New and Jones all with their bottles of methadone strategically placed on the control room windowsill, no wonder he'd looked slightly thrown...)

Now I was in a band with Johnny Thunders and what a ride it was. We toured in France by train, we were canned off in Sweden, we sat around in Paris trying to record and I was learning that this thing moved at it's own pace. Back in London, things ramped up to a whole new level as Thunders started to take over my whole life.

I loved the man but used to dread that 3 am knock on the door as he would arrive, completely out of it, to "party" with us at the Mews. Things got even worse when at one stage he ended up living there too, which was a bit like having a slowly disintegrating **E.T** staying at your house.

I helped Thunders remix **LAMF** for **Jungle Records.** Actually, this was a really pointless exercise when I look back at it. Like remixing **Raw Power** to give it a modern sound, it SO loses the moment, and the moment is the essence of what makes great Rock and Roll.

One night Thunders sat up with me and watched **Snooker,** while I tried to explain the game to this nodding out-of-it New York American. It was the classic semi final match where **Alex Higgins** (a sporting hero of mine who I only ever met once, one night at the Hippodrome when he leaned over and whispered **"Have you got any Charlie?")** came back to beat **Jimmy White** 13-12 to go on to win the World Championship. Even Johnny got excited - well as excited as you can be when you are periodically nodding out....

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But mostly it was awful. Half of **Hanoi Rocks** seemed to hanging out at the Mews as well now. The times Magenta and I walked Johnny round the house praying he wouldn't OD on us, still makes me shudder to recall. I watched this tragically addicted junkie, whose skin was covered in white discoloured patches, shooting up virtually anything he could get his hands on to get high. Vodka, speed, Windowlene.... You think I'm kidding....

But of course, there is always the eternal dilemma that exists in the truly talented but tortured soul because for all that was bad, there was also the sweet, funny, uncompromising man who was such a genius soulful guitarist that it was an education for me just to stand on stage with him or hear him play. And no matter how bad it got, how bad he looked physically, I never once saw him dress in anything less than a sharp Italian suit and typical Johnny accessories, a sort of cross between the Mafia and a New York pirate.

He was the real thing and I cried when I heard he'd died in 1991, his talent never fully realised or acknowledged. Nolan died too, another heroin casualty, and people ask me why I have never touched that drug.....

Having finally escaped from getting to close to the Thunder's flame, I knew without doubt that I was looking for something completely new. Something pure and totally original, something that looks to the future and not to what had already been.

[Chapter 2...]

CHAPTER 2: X Days

I spent the next six months scribbling ideas in a notebook sitting in a coffee bar. On my own. Dreaming.

See, I had always loved those books about **60's groups** in London, about the **2 i's coffee bar** in Soho, imagining that the groups just happened to form there. You know, like in lots of those old black and white movies. I guess I had this fantasy vision that I could just hang out in a coffee bar and somehow would be inspired and become absorbed into a new scene. A new beat generation would be there just 'being', New **Ginsberg** reading over there, A new **Jagger** in the corner with a **Stooges** album under his arm, a real Life **Ziggy** buying a coffee on his way home from art college. It was that easy in my head. I suppose I was also following **Malcolm McLaren's** rules - step 1. Create a scene. Your group comes out of that creative pool...

I had found my magical coffee bar one day by just setting off on foot from the Mews in **Maida Vale** towards **Belgravia** (up market I figured) and chancing upon this coffee house. It was called **"The Village"** and it was in **Shepherd's Market,** in **Mayfair,** which at that time was the place where all the hookers hung out. I guess I thought the name was a sign, after the mysterious Village in **the Prisoner TV** series , and it even had a basement - wow it could also be a club I thought eagerly, my imagination swirling with possibilities. Having found 'the place' I would faithfully go there every day, drink coffee and read my **Colin Wilson** books, willing it to happen. It actually became like a scene from the Prisoner; a little world of my own unto itself, as I sat there scribbling notes and ideas in this red, leather bound note book. Pouring over the music paper small ads for any musician adverts that sounded interesting. The Italian owners must have thought I was mad, sitting there every day on my own pretending it was 1960.

But I believed, and still do, that you have to go through it. There is no easy route to success, that you have to believe in it enough to make it happen. After all, sitting at home in the Mews all day wouldn't make anything happen, I wouldn't meet anyone there. As far as I was concerned it was like I went off to work every day.

Of course I went to gigs too, to see if by chance someone else had been discovered, was out there already, that I might be able to steal.... One night a young journalist I knew told me about this little band playing at London's **Embassy club.**

There were only three people in the audience and afterwards I was so exhilarated by what I had seen that I had to speak to the singer - **Andrew Eldritch** - and ask if he would leave this unheard of group, **The Sister's of Mercy** to join me and my new vision. I instinctively felt Eldritch had something really special, that he was the real thing and we talked excitedly that night. But he had his own vision to follow, however, because of that connection, we became friends and kept in touch through his rise to what would ultimately be **Goth God.** Andrew faithfully sent me every **Sister's of Mercy** single in the post for the next six years, I knew he was something very special.

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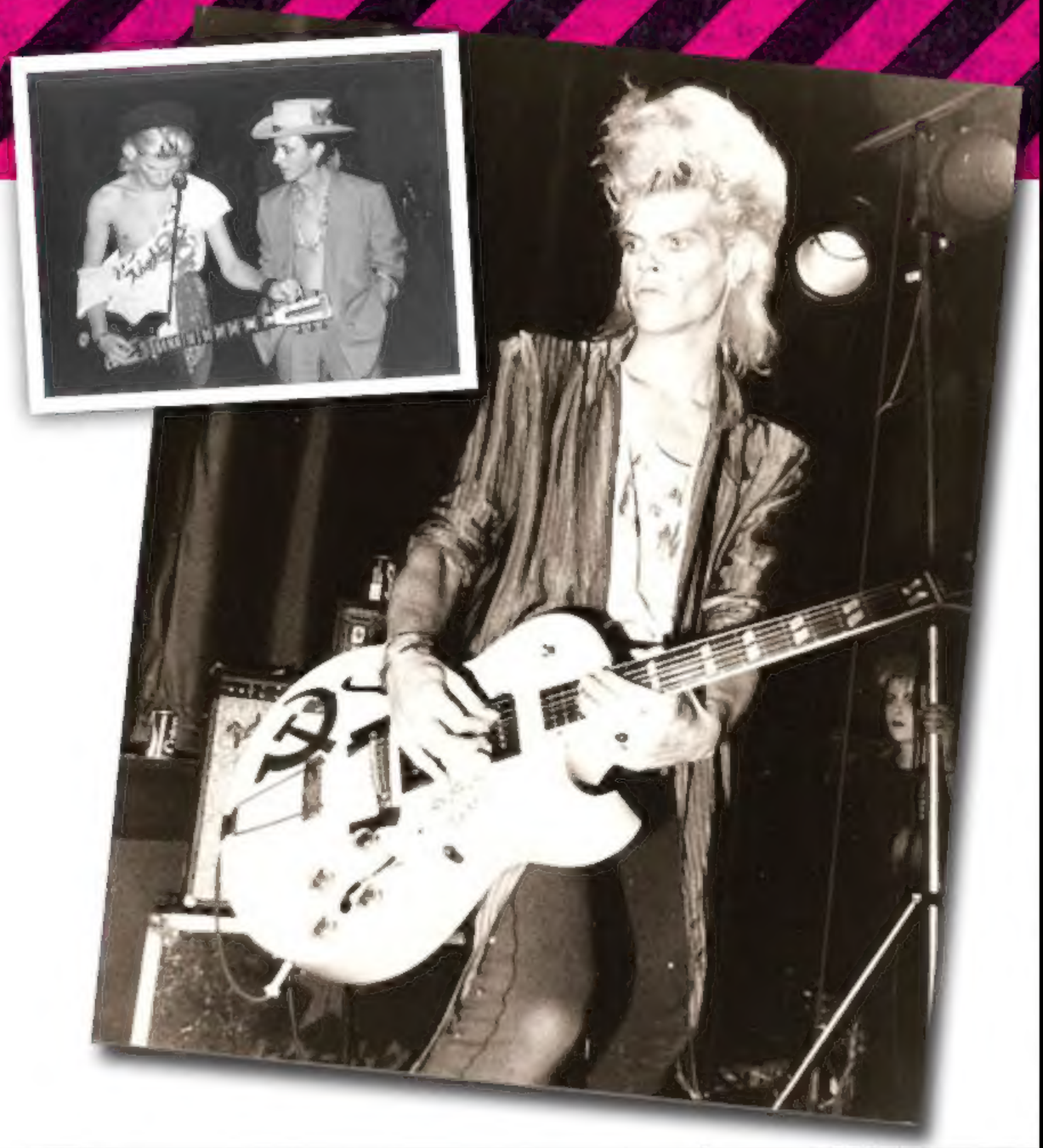
"So you just walk the streets looking for a star... You know a Star when you see one don't you?... It's the hair, the look, the cheekbones.. it's the attitude... easier to teach someone to play than to teach them Charisma"



Back in my cafe in **Shepherd's Market** after a hopeless succession of interviewing charisma-less singers and talentless guitarists in the music papers, just when I had almost given up on the idea of finding someone in an ad I found **Neal X** through the back pages of **Melody Maker,** the very same place that I'd found **Billy Idol** when I was just getting started. When Neal came to the Mews for an interview, he had blonde hair and the right look and he could actually play the odd Thunder's lick. The belief was paying off I told myself. He was a nice middle-class boy but most importantly for the vision I had, he was thin and he had good hair.

The name change from Neal Whitmore to Neal X came later, when journalist **Chris Salewitcz,** writing one of the first pieces about the band and not knowing the guitarist's full name, typed a temporary X and that was it. The fact that Neal was working as a dustman at the time did not put me off because he'd emptied the bins at **Headley Grange** where **Zeppelin** had recorded. I saw that as a sign. He was perfect and we put him up in the spare room at the Mews, leaving his bins behind him for ever. Pretty soon, in traditional Rock guitarist fashion, he found a girlfriend who he could move in with and Neal X was born....

Calmly I explained to him the coffee bar plan. After all, I'd been in **Generation X** and he thought I must know what I was doing as he sat listening, hanging on to my every word.

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We spent the next nine months scouring the streets of London for a singer, just like in those pop movies. We continued to hang out in coffee bars, in hairdressers, in local clothes markets in **Soho, Kensington, Chelsea** and even all the way out at **Richmond** where **the Stones** started, hoping a star might walk by. It was hoping for magic... looking anywhere where creativity might just be propagating. Small ads were hopeless for the star singer I dreamed of, I knew he didn't exist in the conventional sense of singers. Neal and I became a familiar sight in coffee bars all those months. **We started to know the street** and know the people working there. Somehow we were connecting with a London scene.

There's a tape of me working with **Annie Lennox** who lived just down the road from us in **Maida Vale. Mick Jones** had suggested her and we jammed about one afternoon. She had a brilliant voice but I was locked into my vision and I didn't want a girl singer....Yeah right Tony and what was that you were saying about having good perception? One of the songs we jammed together that day as she free formed singing, surfaced years later as a huge hit for **the Eurythmics, "There must be an angel playing with my heart...."**

It seemed hopeless some times but above all we kept the faith. Remember, I didn't know who I was looking for, or what the group would look like yet, but I knew I was looking for the extraordinary. That red notebook did not contain a master plan just needing four puppets to play the parts and sing the songs I'd written, what it did contain was page after page of ideas, concepts and visions of the imaginary group that I wanted to be a part of.

Then, by chance, Magenta and I were out shopping in **Kensington Market** one day when there - dancing to **Cochran and Suicide** in his shop **YAYA** - was **Degville.**

This freak weirdo, with hair made of coloured **feathers.** We'd seen no one like him, ever, but he was for real and that's what so many people forget. The way he looked, this was his whole life and he lived it every day. I had the vision, but I still had to find the reality. Degville was wearing 6" stilettos and the clothes he had made himself. He was a **vision of the future.** Remember, X and I looked very sub Dolls or Cramps at that time, Degville was the missing link. Eventually he would create the pink pineapple hair for me which completed the transformation of me into this new thing, a world away from my punk background.

His shop **YAYA** was to become our base, just like **SEX** was to the **Pistols.** We spent our lives in that shop, hanging out, playing music and generally collecting a scene. I'd moved on from the coffee shop but this was just as good, in fact it was everything, the centre of the Sputnik universe. They were the start of great times.

So now we were three...

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We started rehearsing in the sitting room of Magenta's house. I felt that **Sid Vicious** had left a lot of vibes in that house, God, three people had died there and **Thunders, Nolan and Steve Jones** still all stayed there on and off at that time. This was becoming Rock and Roll holy ground and we absorbed and were absorbing that history.

I remember one day we went to our local pub and **Bowie** was standing there. They were filming part of his video with **Julian Temple** at our local. Bowie didn't realise that the **Bastard Sons of Ziggy** were staring at him from across the road. The band with no name was coming alive...

We rehearsed over long weekends, Degville coming down by train from Birmingham where he still lived on the **Dudley Road.** He'd shared a flat with **Boy George** there and was part of the **Rum Runner club** scene that spawned **Duran Duran.** I went to his flat once with Neal. It seemed like a vision of hell to me but he probably thought the same about where I lived. Fortunately, he and Yana, his business partner, were already coming to London most weekends to bring their newly designed and created clothes to the shop. I used to go to Euston station on a Thursday or Friday night to pick them up in my little Fiat 500. It was easy to find Degville in the crowded station because everyone on the concourse was staring in his direction.

They were fun times and Magenta and I loved Martin's company, we would go clubbing together hanging out, somehow already looking like a band. Martin was great in those days, sweet enthusiastic and still with a fresh creative attitude and energy, although his singing was terrible. I remember being unsure at the time whether he was too 'exotic' for the group, but **Mick Jones,** always my musical confidant in times of indecision, convinced me to persevere, he was sure that ultimately Martin would come through and in a way he did.

Rehearsals at that time consisted entirely of covers. **Personality Crisis,** versions of **The Girl can't help it, Stones** songs. We tried **Memo from Turner.** Old **Tamla Motown.** A song from the movie **The Loveless.** We had an initial foray into songwriting and we wrote a song ourselves called **Wang Wang Wang.** A horrendous racket which told me without any doubt that we weren't quite ready just yet!

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One day Magenta's mother arrived at the mews to take her daughter to rehab because sadly Magenta had also succumbed to the horror that was heroin. This in itself is a whole other story but one that I won't ever be telling. I loved Magenta and trying to save her from herself and this terrible addition caused us both more pain than I could ever describe, nor would I want to. In retrospect, I can only begin to imagine the pain her mother was going through that day We were all rehearsing in the sitting room and the poor woman, already devastated at discovering her daughter had a drug problem, took one look at us and where Magenta was living and looked as if she was going to have a heart attack. It didn't occur to me she might see me as the root of all her troubles....

All rehearsals were still played conventionally, i.e. using a regular bass guitar, X's zebra skin covered Travis Bean guitar and a good old 808 drum machine that **Fachtna O'Kelly** gave us, recorded on to a 4 track PortaStudio. The tapes from then are wild but SO rough. Degville's vocals a mad scream of sub **Cramps** and **Devine.** However slowly a sound was evolving all by itself. And I knew we had something.

But did I really know what I was doing, taking these people and making them believe in my vision? Had Degville secretly dreamed of being a singer all his life? I knew he wasn't ordinary but was he really extraordinary? I still wasn't sure. And was Neal really a genius musician or was he simply impersonating all the great guitarists he had been listening to when he learnt to play? He was a good guitar player but did he have it in him to come up with the original tunes I needed for the band? I had worked with Billy in my last group so I knew what great looked and sounded like. I had yet to discover what Neal and Martin were really about but for now I still believed.

When we were not rehearsing we watched films - **Pink Flamingos, Performance, Clockwork Orange, Blade Runner, Escape from New York, Desperate Living** and **She Male porno movies** as inspiration. Video taped any TV show on **technology.** We listened to **Alan Vega** doing **Ghost Rider,** endless **Dub Reggae** and **Elvis.** Those times formed the basis of the group's musical core... Outrage and Sci-Fi in dub with movies and computers... and rock and roll guitars of course.

Then at night we lived the life **John Walters** imagined crossed with my visions of the Dystopian future. Hanging out in **video arcades** at midnight at **Kings Cross station,** walking with hookers, dressed to kill. We were hip to everything that was happening then, while the menacing **Taxi Driver** soundtrack played in the background. The world of information was less dispersed - not split into thousands of tribes like it is today

As far as we were concerned there was only one game in town and we intended to be it.

Take Eddie Cochran , a drum machine, a Roland Echo box and a 1-note riff and you are there... you just need some futuristic lyrics and think you live in a John Carpenter movie... maybe one day you'll sell a million records...

CHAPTER 3: You Need Songs Kids

We had song titles, ideas, but no songs yet. Its often the best way to develop. You play your favourite covers and gradually your own original sound starts to mutate.

One song started to take over. Endless versions of **BE BOP A LULA** in dub. A sort of stretched dubbed up groove using a **Roland 301 Space Echo** for the vocals. It had a

kind of **Public Image** bass like **Wobble** because we loved **PILs** album Metal Box, another big influence. We recorded endless versions into the PortaStudio.

While we developed our Rock and Roll vision we continued to look for new "stars" to complete the band. Me, X and Degville became a familiar sight around town, back in the cafe, all still hanging out at Deg 's Kensington Market shop **YaYA** every Saturday afternoon, just watching kids go by... looking and waiting for fate to once again give us a sign.

We were rehearsing one weekend when I had a call from my old friend **Christopher Gierke** who managed Thunders. Could I bring a guitarist and drummer over and do a show with Johnny at **Gibus club** in **Paris?** He'd send tickets. I told him about the band I had rehearsing and Christopher said well bring Degville as well. We all stayed at a flat belonging to a friend of Christopher's, sleeping on the floor, the band's first Rock and Roll nights in Paris. It also became the first time the early Sputnik would ever play together, as Degville got up after Thunder's set and we jammed three songs. The audience had never seen anything like it.

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Back home we still were looking for a drummer. Actually we were looking for two drummers. I'd always wanted two drummers like the **Pink Fairies** or **The Glitter Band** and remembered that brilliant beat back with **Chimes** and **Cook.** It was all in the notebook. Two drummers, the big beat. I had loved, revered even, the Fairies and **Hawkwind** so much when I was at school and everything that their underground counter culture scene represented.

Ray Mayhew was the first. He just walked past YaYa one Saturday afternoon looking like a drummer, looking like a star. Martin went out and grabbed him saying would you like to be in our band? He hadn't played before and - of course - didn't have a drum kit, but we could teach him. **Topper Headon** of **the Clash** lent us a drum kit and the kid got practicing. So Ray became the prime example of my oft quoted mantra - "Easy to teach someone to play drums... you can't teach someone charisma". You know, Ray turned into a really solid drummer too, so you see it does work - sometimes...

Looking back I wonder what he thought when he got home that day. We changed the course of his life. What made him just say yes, instantly, to this bunch of freaks standing in a clothes shop in the basement of Kensington Market that Saturday afternoon?

Meanwhile back at the Mews we were extending the recordings. We came up with a track called **"Hag in a black leather jacket".** Even Degville thought it was tacky. We recorded a version of **In the Ghetto** one night, sort of **PIL** in dub and then an original track called **Sicky Sarah.** We were getting closer to the sound we were searching for but it didn't have that driving energy yet.

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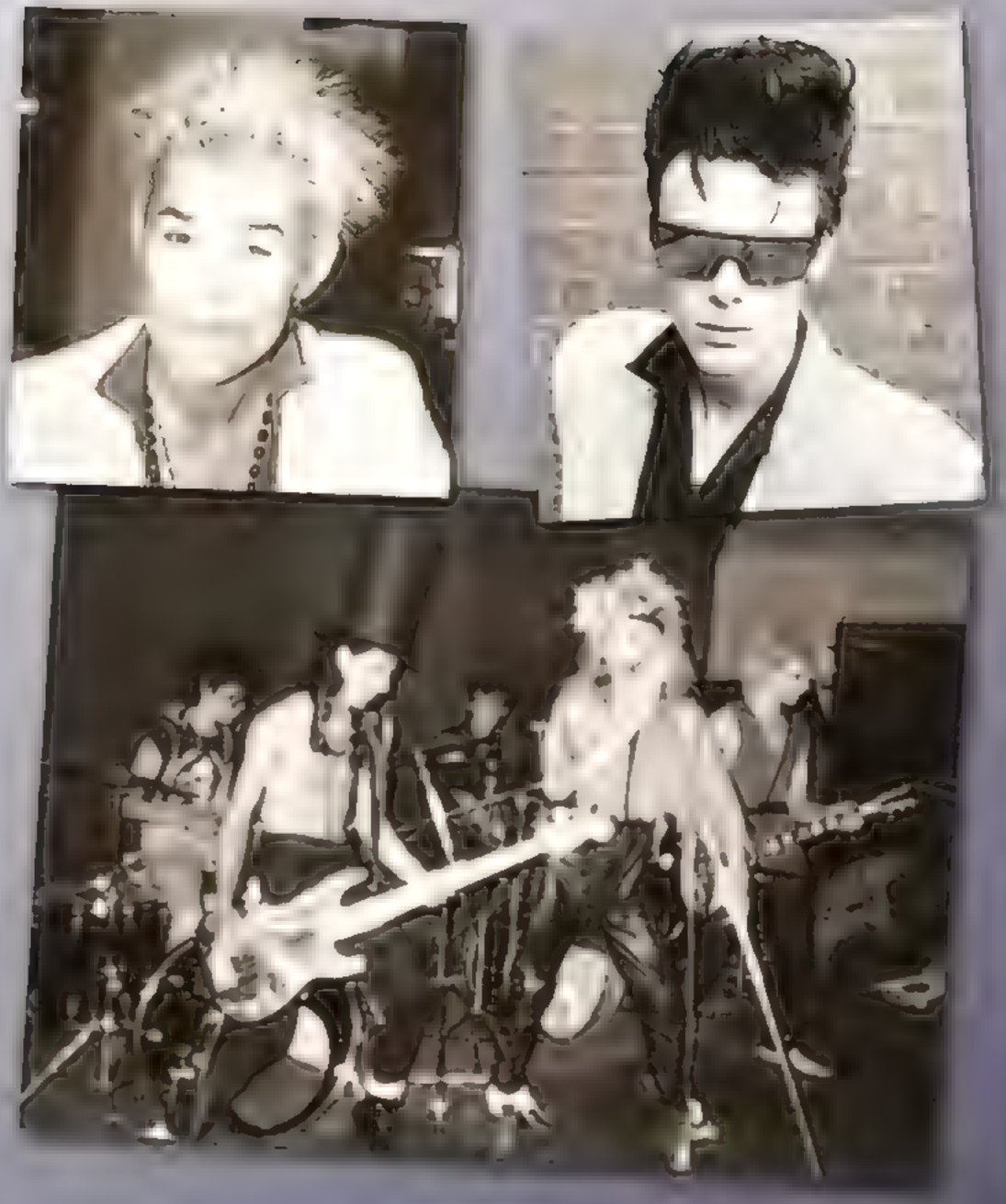

This is the earliest known video of that early band. Naive and not used to being filmed, you can feel the close relationships and the sense of excitement at what the future could hold... This is one of the most exciting times in the life of any band, when you believe you have something truly unique and extraordinary and you can't wait to unleash it on an unsuspecting world.

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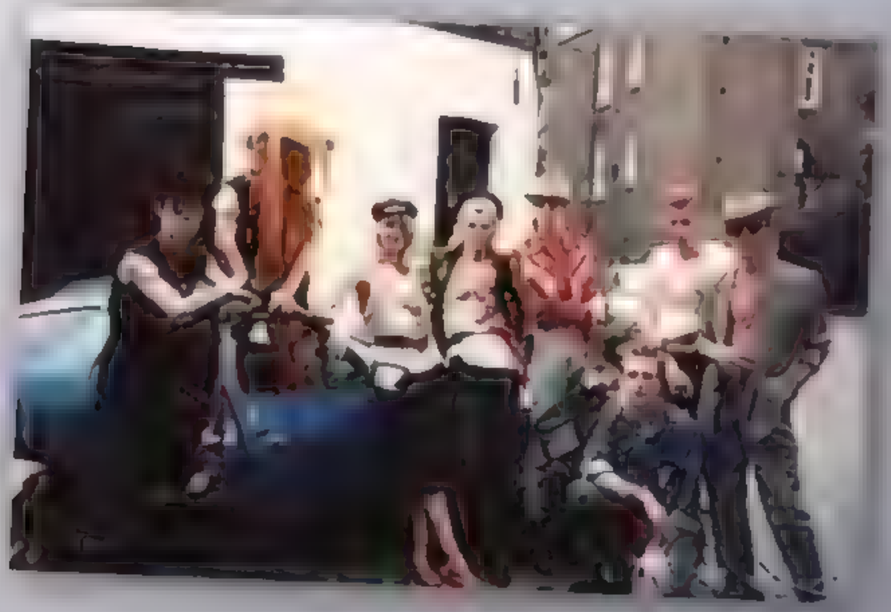


We continued to rehearse in the spare bedroom. You could only just get the band in as well as the equipment, and various people were still sleeping in the high bunk bed above the guitar amps. There was no window in the room, and it would get so hot that we would rehearse for a couple of songs then have to go and sit outside in the mews on the cobblestones just to get some air ...not that there was much air because a busy messenger service had their offices opposite. There was a non stop roar of motorcycles in the background while we played.

They thought we were mad. We probably were. Sitting outside the mews house in the sun one day on one of those gasping for air breaks, a really cute boy walked past. It was **Chris Kavanagh.** He gets the talk and before you know it he's in and another drum kit is acquired, this time from **Terry Chimes.** Mick, Joe and everyone in **the Clash** was so very supportive of the band and we were all hanging out together. Me, Neal, Degville and Magenta all played parts in **Strummer's** black and white London gangster film he was making called **Hell W10.** So Chris was now the next to learn to play while we continued rehearsing. But it was all part of the magic, sweating away in the 3m square room at Magenta's (now with two drum kits rammed inside) with the ghost of **Sid Vicious** watching over us. Of course I can already play bass, but there is definitely a fresh invigorating energy playing with people learning for the first time.

And we worked really hard.

Mick Jones lent X a real guitar - a **50's white Gibson,** the one Mick played in the **London Calling** video, and it really looked the part. Gradually a set is rehearsed of our rock n roll in dub. Versions of **Jailhouse Rock** with new lyrics renamed **Moscow Rocks.** "Everybody in the eastern block was dancin' to the Moscow Rock...." Well it was a start. And we played an early version of **Rockit Miss USA** Eddie Cochran style, a steal of the Suicide track but with new lyrics which we later added a chorus to. It was coming together and by then I couldn't wait to get out and play for real.

[ ]

We went and saw **Rob Hallet** who had been one of my original agents from **Generation X** about getting some low-key live shows to try things out. He worked with **Duran** now and the agency was called **Performance** (perfect movie name sign).

We played three secret gigs at colleges. We used real drums, real bass with a kind of space voodoo image and we are supporting the band **New Model Army.** We use the Clash roadie **Flea** and a Ford transit and in true tradition we all drove to the gigs in the back with the equipment. Mick mixed the sound at the shows.

Those college students didn't know what hit them!

By chance the band is mentioned in one of the mainstream music paper's gossip columns but we are called the **HOT DOGS.** God knows why. We go down like nothing on earth because this is like nothing on earth. And you know what was so great? Even though we had no proper songs yet, nor had we developed our Sputnik sound, when you have something special you really know it and this was magical. We were on our way but we needed a proper name.

[Chapter 4...]

CHAPTER 4:
The Name Game

Back at the Mews we were still in rehearsals torturing Eddie Cochran.

Every week someone suggested a different name. There are endless tries in the ideas book, all of them terrible like **Teenage Barbie Dolls, The English Opium Eaters.** Degville had come up with "Sperm **Festival**" Then there was the suggestion "Nazi **Occult Bureau**". Great name to get you on Radio 1, Not. Terrible connotations. It's that desperate dilemma of all bands like us. That exact combination of outrage and originality. That old Reich shit is too easy a play and definitely brings bad karma.

We were looking for something special, original, like all bands. It'll come when we are ready.

Fachtna comes up with it again... He calls to say I should come over to where he is living in **Bruton Mews** and read this article he's found in the **Herald Tribune** about this **Russian street gang.**

I call everyone and I'm excited as I bring home the piece torn out of the paper that day. I still have it. It is about a 23 year old **Fagin** like character who controls a Moscow street gang involved in money laundering. Its perfect, it somehow captures the essence of the band image we're trying to project..

The gang is called **SIGUE SIGUE SPUTNIK...** Even the "Sputnik" connection fits into my vision of man's **first object in space** - like some kind of man made god. I get the name translated by our friend Kass into Japanese phonetic lettering.

Actually **Fachtna** never got the credit he deserves as one of the true mentors of Sputnik. The Sputnik name makes a great story every time its printed, like all great names, so different that you can guarantee every journalist who ever writes about you will repeat the story, furthering the myth...

[Continue...]

I designed the logo to look vaguely **Suicide-meets-East Blok.** It was drawn by hand at home, no Photoshop back then. It was classic branding.

I didn't know it at the time, there being no Google back on a Sinclair computer, that a couple of other organizations had a similar name and logo. "Are you worried" asks a **Belgium** journalist when I'm staying there some years later "that a left wing terrorist gang has recently bombed a supermarket ...that they might think ill of you, especially as Sputnik seems so... capitalist!" The terrorist gang's logo was the same except for **"CCC"** through the star. I remember thinking "oh shit", but it's all part of the magic isn't it? Where you mix up cultures, beliefs and Rock and Roll? Showbiz and terror makes for a great story but yes, for the record we were scared for a moment, and there were a few moments like that. There was also a motorcycle gang in the Phillipines called Sigue Sigue Sputnik who would cut slashes on their arms for each victim they killed. I wondered if they were fans or did they pick up on the same article?

Mick Jones then adds a new, very important part in the story. For my birthday he arrives with an early **PRO1** synth. You can link it simply to the **808** drum machine to have a rudimentary sequencer. It could not have come at a better time. I had been getting increasingly frustrated because although we had lots of lyrical ideas, even the title Love Missile FIII, as yet there was no original sound.

"We've got no music and this is hopeless, YOU'VE gotta come up with some ideas for a change ...or its over". This was the ultimatum I threw at a stunned X and Degville

before I flew off to America for a week to see **The Clash** on tour with the **Who,** leaving them the Mews keys and a set of lyric ideas and sketches.

The 808 portastudio in Pindock Sitting Room

The ultimatum worked because when I returned home amazingly, they had recorded three songs ...and they sounded brilliant.

My doubts about the creative abilities of both Neal and Martin were swept away in that moment. The two of them had really come up with it and I felt a massive surge of relief.

It was what I had been praying for, a completely new sound. It was a kind of manic rocking **Donna Summer** in dub. By chance they had found that you could just plug the 808 drum machine into the Pro 1 and out came the D D DD D D DD sound.

For speed they'd just set the speed control at the 3 'o Clock position as it seemed about right. The simple sequencer only remembered 2 patterns of 16 notes so there could only be riffs and choruses.

The songs **LOVE MISSILE F1-11, SHE'S MY MAN** and **TEENAGE THUNDER** they recorded that week are the very same versions available on the Jungle album **FIRST GENERATION,** exactly as X and Deg mixed them that day on the 4 track Portastudio while I was in the USA with Mick. It's funny because they couldn't get the words F1-11 to rhyme into "Shoot it up" but we called the song that anyway as it was a better title.

[ ]

"She's My Man" was actually the more definitive dub track and **"Teenage Thunder"** was the same track but the sequencer accidentally played it backwards. They were all at exactly the same speed, 192 beats per minute. Again the Dub effects were created due to the limitations of the Portastudio only allowing either the vocal echos or guitar echos at any one time.

See how fate takes a hand, just when you think its all hopeless?

Finally, we had the sound.

To play in the dub effects live we needed a girl. A very glamorous **Jayne Mansfield** type girl. Except one of the rules in my little red book said that she would never appear in the photos of the band lineup. No **Transvision Vamps** in here thanks very much.

Yana, Martins partner in **YAYA** got the job because, well just because she happened to be there and she was tall and shapely, the massive blonde beehive and 50's movie star make-up came later, as did her ability to play keyboards....

ACE the Japanese girl who worked in the shop during the week became the onstage roadie, a job she was totally unsuited for as she had 2" fingernails. Everybody was now in place and we assembled the cast of extras from the people hanging around us at the time. It was that easy because they already had the look.

'Amazon woman' or Amo becomes tour manager, with no experience whatsoever apart from the fact that she had worked as a PA to an accountant. All the assembled crew would all be called the **Ultravixens.** Another genius visual idea and press time bomb.

Next rule in the red book was only have tall women as crew, so **Jessica** another girl from that scene became the **offstage sound mixer.** Qualifications? Um, tall, wild and owning the right record collection. Business suicide, but it was all these unconventional elements that made the band what it was.

[Continue...]

From then on, every weekend we would be playing the demos in the shop at ear splitting volume, looking like stars and wearing our own **T-SHIRTS** which we had sat up for hours stitching together in order to sell them in the shop to earn the money to play the next gigs. These featured pictures of **transsexuals** and all our other early influences, much like the early Pistols shirts but with the bands name in Japanese or Russian.

People were buying lots of the shirts from the shop now before anyone outside our clique knew we were a group, they just liked the designs. They were out there unaware that they were already promoting the band.

We actually printed each of the **FUCK** shirts ourselves, each one printed with a different colour to be unique. It was our art, every one special, individual. God the care and detail we put into everything. It was my **fanaticism,** everything had to be special, detailed exactly just so.

Before we had even played a gig and as fate would have it **Billy Idol** came in to the shop one day when none of the band are there and bought a T-shirt, just because he liked the look of it.

Sputnik was on Idol's back before he knew it!

Meanwhile we continued to rehearse ceaselessly in the Mews, refining that Sputnik groove but at that time unable to recreate live the sound of the now super rocking demos.

Mick, on tour in America with The Clash rang one day to say that he'd seen a new type of guitar, a **Roland guitar synthesizer** that will trigger a synth module. He suggests that maybe we could use that to get the New Sputnik sound live that had been so illusive, it could generate a synthesized bass sound. Once again the timing was magical but the guitar is very expensive.

[Continue...]

On his return to London Mick arrived with a present; he'd bought the guitar for us. As always I am stunned by the generosity of my friend. I painted the words **ELVIS 1990** on the guitar and the legendary **Space Bass** was born. Unfortunately, so was the myth that when we played live the sequencer bass was on tape because no one could believe that any one could actually physically play that sound. But I did and it's that guitar that triggers the synth basses. Believe me it is unbelievably difficult to play because you have to hit every note perfectly and play 10 milliseconds ahead of the beat.

I was practicing now along with the others but it meant that we were completely live and could **improvise** and react to the dub effects just like a live **reggae band.** No one gig of ours would ever sound the same as the one before, which is just the way it should be when you are tight as a live band.

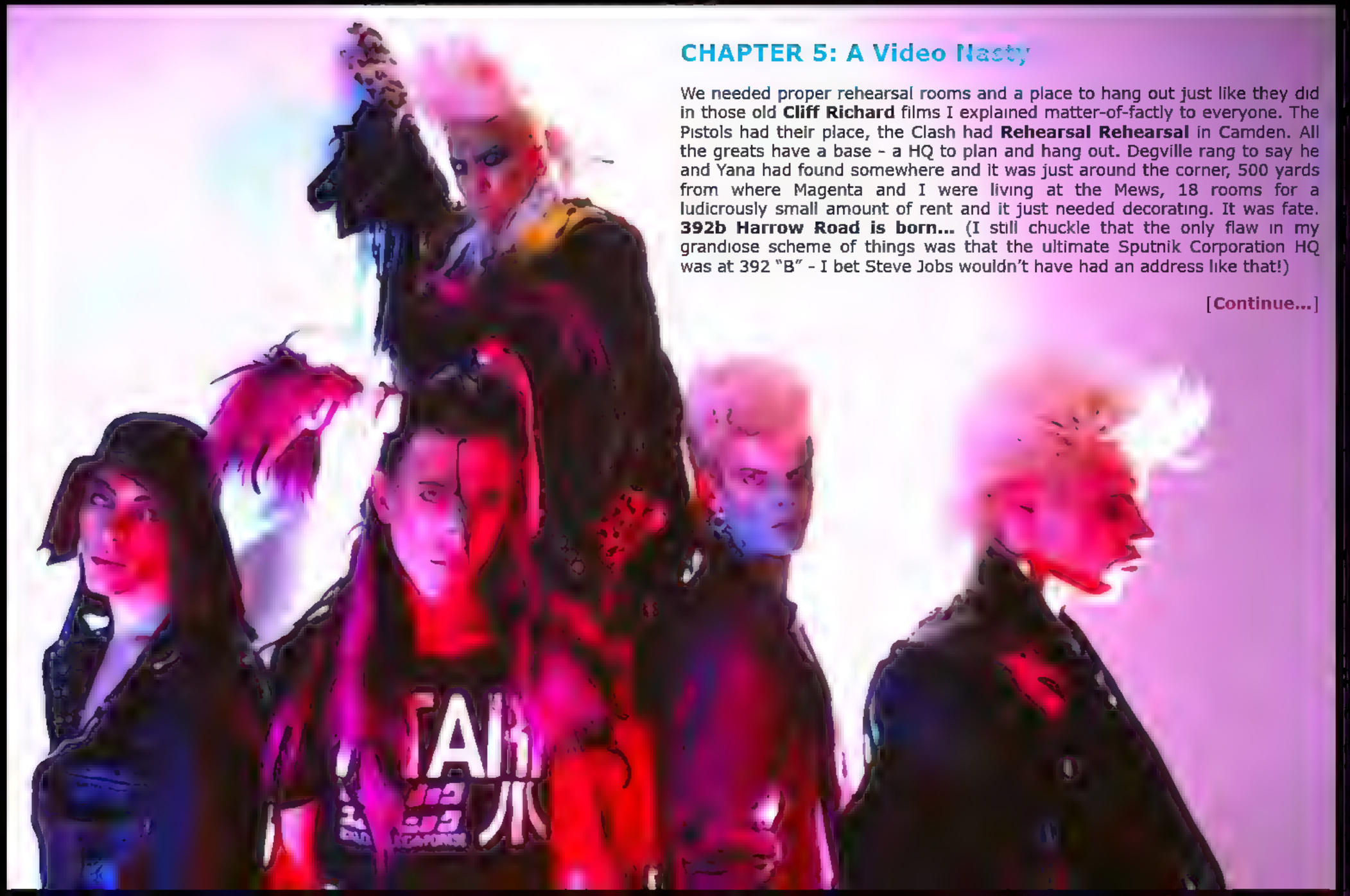
Then a shock. **Mick Jones** rings to say that he's been **sacked** from **The Clash.** Me, Martin and Neal stare at each other in disbelief. How can they sack the man who started it all?

I went over to Mick's flat in Notting Hill Gate to find out what had happened and he looked as shocked as I did when he opened the front door. He had arrived at rehearsals that day to find everyone staring at the floor and then Paul says **"You're out".** And that was that and the band that represents the voice of the people, breaks up without another word.

There is no question that Mick can be incredibly difficult to work with, was and still is fanatical, self-centred and a complete pain in the ass at times, but there is also a kind, sweet, sensitive and unconditionally generous side to him that makes me love him to this day, quite apart from the fact that he just happens to be a musical genius.

To this day I cannot understand how things got so bad between him, Joe and the others in **The Clash.** Why no one reached out and tried to talk about what was going on before it was too late. But there we go, I've seen it a million times in bands and who am I to talk - I've lived it repeatedly myself - even if I wasn't aware it was happening all around me at the time.

[Chapter 5...]



CHAPTER 5: A Video Nasty

We needed proper rehearsal rooms and a place to hang out just like they did in those old **Cliff Richard** films I explained matter-of-factly to everyone. The Pistols had their place, the Clash had **Rehearsal Rehearsal** in Camden. All the greats have a base - a HQ to plan and hang out. Degville rang to say he and Yana had found somewhere and it was just around the corner, 500 yards from where Magenta and I were living at the Mews, 18 rooms for a ludicrously small amount of rent and it just needed decorating. It was fate. **392b Harrow Road is born...** (I still chuckle that the only flaw in my grandiose scheme of things was that the ultimate Sputnik Corporation HQ was at 392 "B" - I bet Steve Jobs wouldn't have had an address like that!)

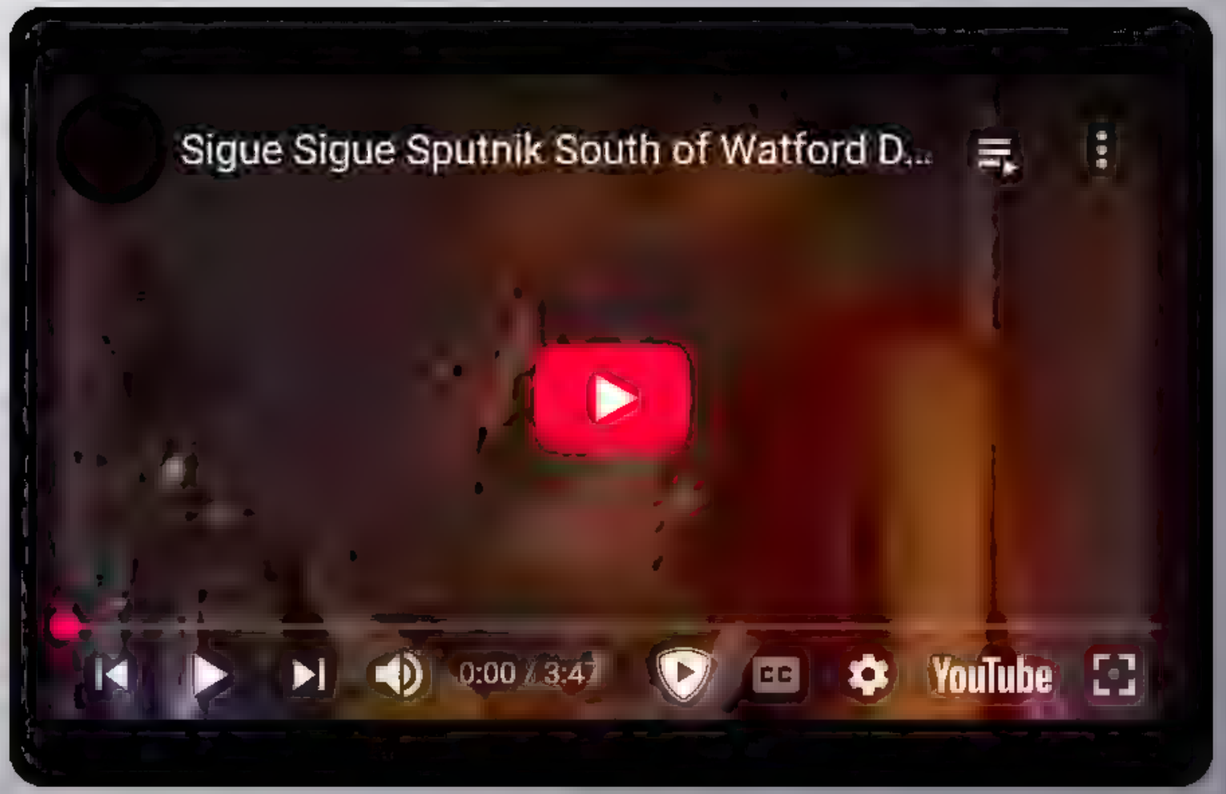
[Continue...]

The whole band take to paint brushes. Everyone in the band lived there at one stage, living in Sputnik World. We put my grandfathers old billiard table in the center of the room where the clothes were now being designed and stitched together and I set to work with X to convert one room into a rehearsal room, complete with small P.A on the first floor and soundproofed with pink plastic walls. The soundproofing was made from dozens of old car tyre's we found in a skip outside. It was a fire deathtrap and the best feature once we'd finished is the word **ELVIS** painted on the carpet in 6 foot letters so that when we rehearse we will **walk in his name and He will bless us.**

Attention to details like this were starting to **possess** me. It felt like I was creating some huge obsessive movie script for my perfect group. In my mind everything was important, everything had to be just so. I could not control the actual players, the musicians, nor did it occur to me to try, and that was a big mistake. They were all growing spontaneously into the roles I'd placed them in and developing strong individual "characters" and images by themselves, but I was so caught up in my own fanatical attention to detail that I neglected to keep an eye on them and nip in the bud any signs of those monster egos, the bad attitude and the bad habits that would almost inevitably form once a band has any success.

Was I **Steve Jobs** or **Doctor Frankenstein?**

Rehearsals started in ernest in the pink padded room (or the loony bin as we now fondly calling it) and we were certainly walking in Elvis's name. By now the band were playing brilliantly, sounding great and we had developed a way of improvising, drums dropping out of the mix whenever they felt like it, echos flying everywhere.



There was a collective sense of excited anticipation in the air knowing that we sounded like nobody else. Or looked like anybody else.

The night before our first proper gig at a small club in Leatherhead (a fitting first town title I thought, very **David Lynch!!)** I made the band stay up until 3 a.m to paint all the flightcases red with the SSS logo in Japanese along the side.

All the equipment had to look just so before we even left the building, I wanted us to look like this invincible futuristic army arriving, to create a stir before we'd played a note.

The scene would already be set. We finally went to sleep that night in an intoxicating fug of cigarettes and spray can fumes, full of excitement at the thought of finally playing the first show.

[Continue...]

Of course the other masterstroke was that I knew we must try to video everything, ready for that great documentary we'd make sometime in the next century. You see, in my head I **was** creating a movie. We hired a video camera to capture the first show but didn't realise we had to charge the battery (or probably forgot due to aerosol poisoning from all the paint spraying). We filmed a little before the battery died out and Magenta managed to top this by then leaving her diary and the camera on top of the car as we drove away after the show. Amazingly a good citizen found them both and phoned the number in the diary. You win some you loose some, but we learnt our lesson. **Leatherhead** may not have been immortalised but everything else would be and I would never have a camera die on me again. Those magical videos are amazing today when I look at them, like looking back in time, the unseen **"Quatermass and the band"** film. There's footage of Degville tying into my hair the first pink dreadlocks that would eventually define my look that was to become known as the Pink Pineapple.

Meanwhile I was in ever increasing manic Saatchi and Saatchi mode. Degville and Yana were working out of **392b Harrow** road now, along with X and everyone else, making all our clothes. I was creating all the classic T-shirt designs. My vision encapsulated in these T-shirts made us look like MadMax II and you can see it in that classic Sputnik photo shot by **Derek Ridger's** on a wet steel walkway at night (see it on the Chapter list page) with me wearing the **ATARI** t-shirt making sure it was sending out all the right references.

That night set up one of my essential rules for all future photos. Next rule in the red book was that we would only take photos at night. That's how we created that futuristic neon nightmare look but it was to make many photo sessions difficult because we couldn't exactly just pop outside for a snap. No. This band only came out in the Dystopian nuclear night time.

The sound was ready, but not quite. There was one other element that was to shape the future of Sputnik.

I was sitting at home one Saturday morning playing with a new **VHS video recorder** I had just hired from Radio Rentals (that's what you did in those days). It had some new features I wanted to try out such as being able to lay down an audio track first and then dub video from another player onto that. For fun I recorded one of our demos, **Love Missile F111** onto a fresh cassette.

As I recorded the tape copy on to the VHS, I accidentally hit play/record on the cassette machine and that's why at the start on the Jungle album you can hear a slight glitch just before the vocals come in - I'd just fucked up the only master copy!

I then started copying sections from bootlegs of my favourite movies on to the tape - all the ones that had influenced us as well as bits of **exploding helicopters, screams, gunfire** and any outrageous scenes I could think of. Out came **Terminator, Fire Fox, Desperate Living, Long Good Friday, Clockwork Orange, Assault on Precinct 13,** anything to hand using another old VHS machine.

Another twist of fate meant that when I did a dub copy onto the video master I discovered that if you flicked the sound monitor across, you could lay the sound of the overdubs on as well, explosions and gunfire... It was at 2a.m. the next morning when I finished after 16 hours straight work. When I finally played the tape to everyone we realised we had created our first home video, so much better for Sputnik than just an audio demo tape.

But also that video tape was to shape the entire Sputnik sound and it's video impact on Rock and Roll and the sound of these effects became the final element in the actual Sputnik sound. We would feed in the voices and explosion sounds when we played live and it sounded brilliant. The sound of **Malcolm McDowel** saying "UltraViolence" over and over again at at live gig created a real sense of menace and it was like nothing heard before.

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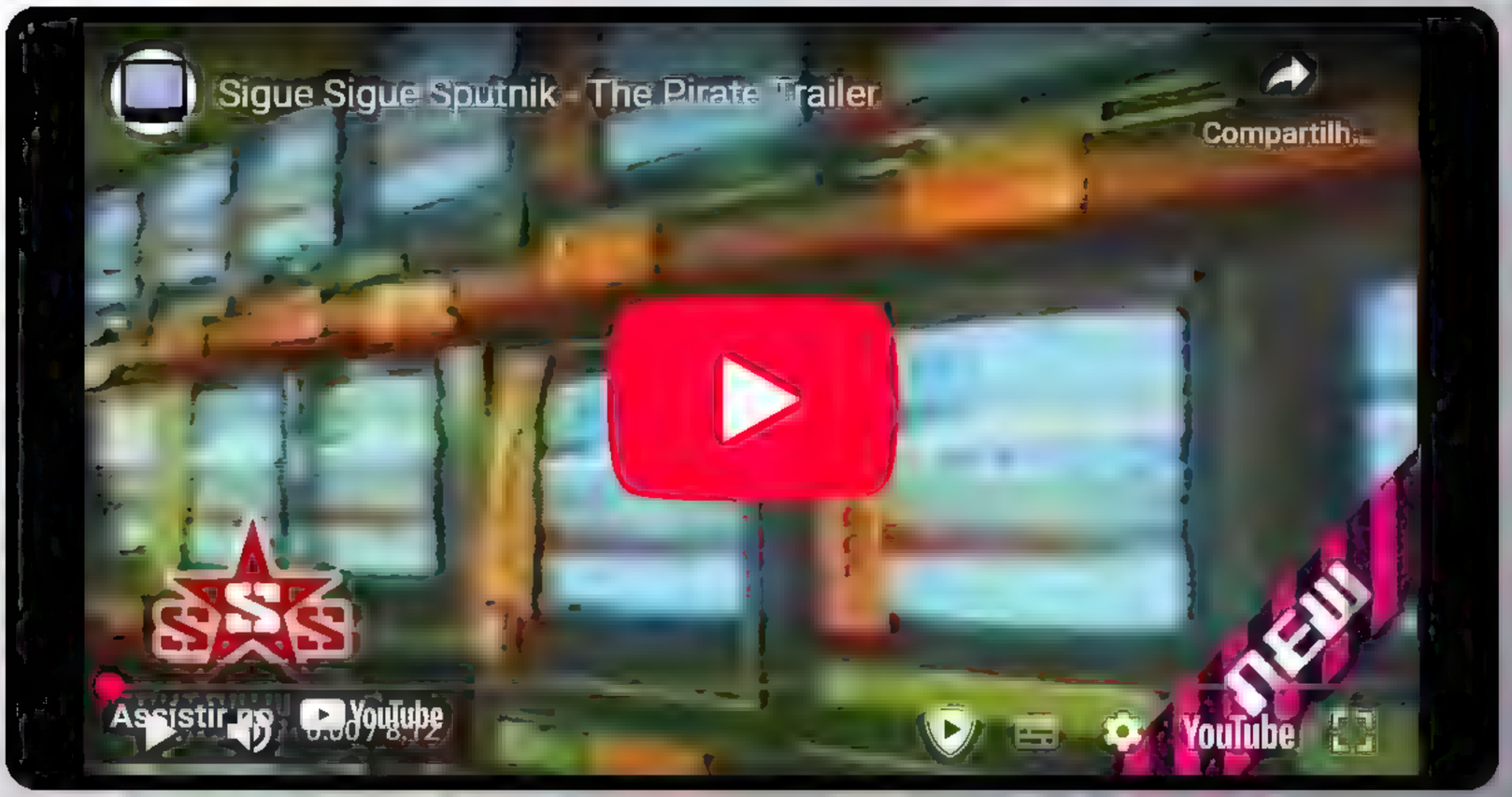


We had the final piece of the jigsaw. It was this video - the only copy made that day - that I took to record companies for them to watch, not the usual demo audio tape for them to sit and tap their feet to. We had to play it in the big room outside the A&R guy's offices because they didn't have video machines themselves in those days which meant in that case the whole record company got to see it.

The office girls were of course appalled by the sickening scenes of **guns, violence and rape** depicted on that tape but they were sure as hell talking about it when it was over. We loved it of course.

It all became part of the magic and the myth. A record company could call us up and we would go in and play them the video, have an expensive lunch, and then leave, taking the only copy in existance with us. And they only heard that one song. I always figured that the idea and the sound would grow in their minds as they described it to others in the company.

And it worked like a dream. The myth grew. **EMI** only got their own copy of that video when they signed us and gave us the money and they were as pleased about that as we were.

[Chapter 6...]

The game now went into overdrive as I applied the rules for gigging and building up mystique. I knew we had the band and the look and the songs.

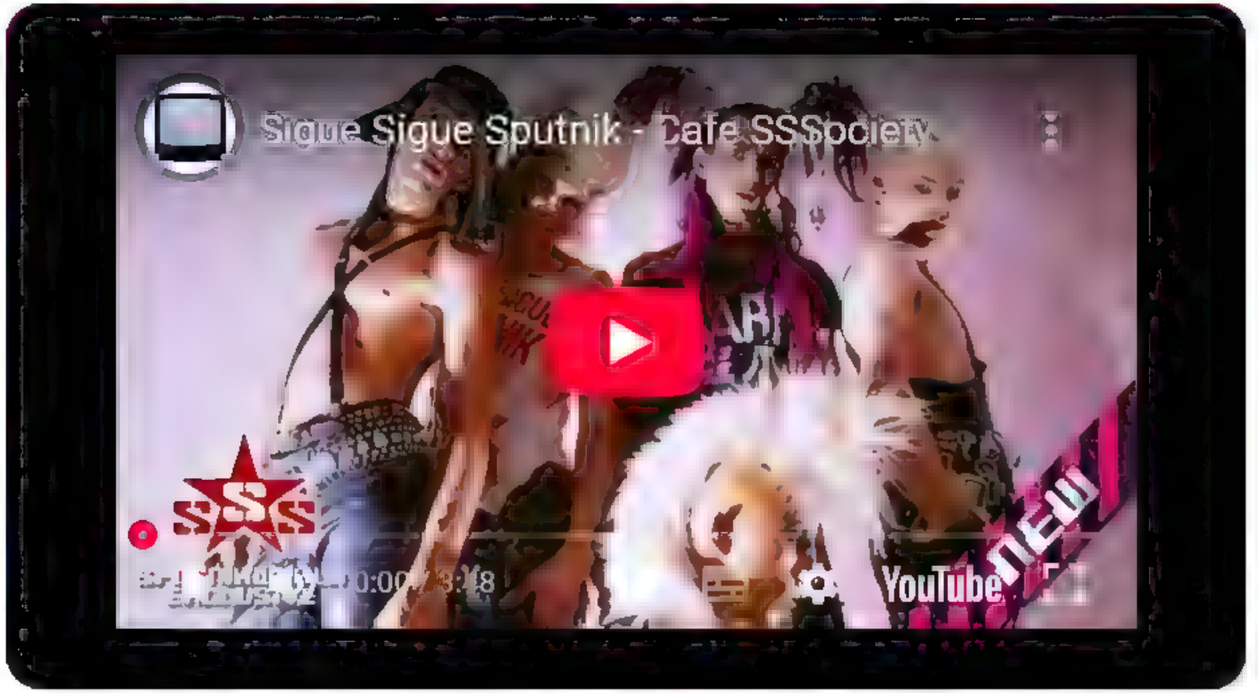
We needed a record deal. A big record deal....

CHAPTER 6:
Working the Scene

I knew the band played brilliantly by now but had no live gigging experience. These boys had to get match fit and there's only one way to do that. So we tried to play as many club gigs as we could around the UK, generally in the time honoured fashion of driving back through the early hours of the morning, all together in the back of a Ford Transit van, sitting atop our giant red flight cases.

Occasionally, funded by good T-shirt sales, we'd book into some unsuspecting bed and breakfast hotel, a bedraggled gang of brightly coloured freaks, terrifying the owners as we arrived at 2 a.m. Naturally after all those weeks of rehearsals and painting, everyone was quite ready to **party like hell.**

Even Mick came to mix the sound again, sitting on top of the equipment like everyone else, as now he suddenly found a lot of time on his hands. On our way to a gig in Hastings **Yana** came up with "**Big Audio Dynamite** " to go with Mick's "B.A.D" the name of the new group he was forming. Later I suggested he get **Don Letts** in the band to add the element of film to his Hip Rock sound. We all helped each other freely with ideas back in that creative time. There was such camaraderie.



Playing London was different. That's where the record companies lived. That needed something special. Gigs in previously unheard of venues such as strip joints, late night drinking clubs, tiny cinemas. Advertised by photocopied hand made flyers. Difficult and threatening to get into.

Ideally we'd purposely take A&R guy's names off the guest list just to add a bit of mischief to the game and to ramp up the excitement and you don't need me to tell you that it works - what they can't have they want more of... and we were going to give them more... oh yes!

[Continue...]

We were also hanging out at **The Embassy Club** having adopted a special night called **"Astral Flight".** Even that name seemed to fit in with SSS world. We were there all the time, our crowd growing, wearing the clothes and the T-Shirts. Of course we could perform late night shows there too. (Michael **D. Bernard** who ran it is a big deal photographer in L.A now - he took some amazing pics of Carbon/Silicon when we were at **Cochella** in 2008). Fittingly the female Star of **Mad Max II, Virginia Hey** came there one night (I got nowhere with her before you ask - tried though...). One night Magenta brought an American star and his Manager, **Steve Fargnoli** down to the Club. She was **Prince's** UK PR in those days. I tried to strike up rock chat with the **diminutive one** but he is the ultimate man of few words, I think I got a polite , softly spoken "hello" but the club was that kind of place, where these people would just turn up to see what the buzz was and Sputnik was King of the Night.

We even formed another group to be our support act.

The group was to be called **The Transexual SS...Now** they would truly scare people! **Mad LISA** the transsexual (and in case you ever doubted that, she used to prove it all the time...), the girl with the wild throaty laugh who hung out with the band in the early days would be the singer. Danny, another Kensington Market boy would play an attack guitar, by literally just bashing his guitar with whatever was to hand which was understandable, given that he'd never played an instrument before. We created a backing track for them to perform over. This was Performance Art after all. A 20- minute version of **Wild Thing.** So very appropriate.

They opened for us when we played the **Mars Bar,** a gangster dive in **Praed Street Paddington.** They're mentioned in the **Record Mirror** review. Basically they would come on looking great and visually, sonically, and **sexually attack** the audience. It created a real vibe for us to come on to. The element of danger and surprise we needed.

[ ]

3 great posters. Note Yana doing a **Cramps** *guitar pose.*

They wound everyone up, Lisa loving every minute of being a star... it was a **John Waters vision** come to life - canned off after 2 minutes at **Kingston Polytechnic,** the worst was yet to come.

Somehow they became part of the whole madness. I used to sit in the back of the tour bus marveling that I could have created such a monster. I can hear Lisa's insane laugh even now, culminating in the night we stopped in a truck stop to get drinks at 1a.m. and I found Lisa standing on top of a table waving her huge tits at irate truckers shouting "you want this then...you wankers..." then the police arrived as X was taking a leak in the car park... marvellous!

It all adds to the vibe. Even the support act was like no one else. The Sputnik Mad World was beginning to take shape and it was all still underground, outside the mainstream media and radio.

But not for long.

I was looking through my archive of Sputnik photos the other day and I found an early picture of one of the bands first London shows which we played at the **Electric Cinema** in **Portobello road.** I remember it well, especially as I had the whole event filmed by **Dan Donovan, Don Letts** and **Magenta.**

It was a legendary event. We'd done one of our first pieces in the NME with a brilliant photo shot, again with Derek Ridgers, at the **Hippodrome nightclub** with the massive Close Encounters Lights behind us. We used to hang out there too, listening to **Thriller** and **Idol's** songs, waiting our turn to have a record on the decks one day.

Peter Stringfellow always believed in us and let us in for free and with free drinks at his table. Degville loved that. Anyway, there was a 2 page piece in **NME** out on Thursday, the gig the next day at the Electric on Friday.

That Friday afternoon **11 record companies,** all London's majors, phoned us up to ask to be on the guest list. I actually filmed all those A&R men trouping in to see the show myself.

As support act we showed the S&M film **"Maitress"** (it's got **Gerard Depardieu** in it).

And there, in the very front row of the gig was a deathly white face staring up at X playing guitar. It was **Johnny Thunders** himself come to us his blessing.

[Continue...]

It wasn't a completely easy ride though. The night before we recorded our first proper TV performance for a Carlisle based show for Border television called **"Bliss"** with **Murial Grey** the presenter, we played in Leeds **"Adam and Eve"**. Only about 5 members of an audience turned up and we played despondently to an empty room. We felt a little deflated next day, arriving at the TV studio, but fueled by plenty of alcohol we gave it everything to a bemused room full of mainly schoolchildren and a few dress ups they'd brought in with vertical hair getting into it.

I have to say the sound is actually really great with the **Dub sound effects** and **movie samples** perfectly clear. You occasionally see **Ace** the Japanese **Ultravixen roadie** leap on stage to adjust someone's hair but generally she lurks just off stage, adding to the vibe. Degville looking like **The Predator,** I'd yet to adopt the universal sunglasses. We just played our entire set. EMI sent their main head of A&R up to hang out with us, **Dave Ambrose** who I really liked. He'd signed **the Pistols.**

After the show that night I was to meet my future girlfriend, the producer of the Show, **Janet Street-Porter.** By then, Magenta and I - although still living together - were no longer romantically involved. I had no idea when I met her that Janet was married. I vaguely remember returning to the shabby bed and breakfast hotel where the band was staying the next morning, to find a seriously out of it Degville in my bed. Later that day I learnt that a big fight had broken out between the group and the local punters after I'd left the club where we had been drinking with Janet. A sign of things to come.

My relationship with Janet was to propel us into the frenzied world of the **Red Tops.** You could say the timing was perfect, although perfect for what depends on how you look at it. Was this to be our **Bill Grundy Moment?** (Where the Pistols found out what it was like to have sudden tabloid attention) I had had no dealings with this type of press before and was completely unprepared. Magenta though was ready and revved up to do that DeVine thing but little did I realise that that thing was about to explode in my face.

I'd arranged to meet **JSP** in a restaurant in Notting Hill Gate called **192.** It was a real media types hang out but this level of restaurants was way beyond my world at that time so I had no idea what to expect. I even took Magenta with me for safety. I had always admired JSP the TV person and she was formidably intelligent and outspoken. I waited at the bar trying hard not to draw attention to me and Magenta, although the plume of Pink hair was making staying inconspicuous slightly difficult.

Janet had flown down from Carlisle and arrived straight from Heathrow. She walked in, saw us, came over and then said " aaah theres my husband sitting over there with **Alan Yentob** having dinner....!" With that she turned and left. I was dumbstruck, having never been in a situation like that before. Thank God Magenta was with me. Worse, her husband came over to ask if that was Janet..... "Er, well yes, it did look like her" I spluttered.

Magenta and I found JSP hiding around the corner outside. I was freaked. A day later I got a phone call at home from the **Sunday Mirror, Christopher Hitchens,** who said "well we know what's going on and we are going to write it anyway - so what do you say?".

That was it - I had entered flashbulb world. After all those years sitting on my own in a cafe, dreaming the dream, here I was with a happening group and now a first taste of celebrity world. I'd be lying if I said I didn't like it. Everything ramped up another gear once we made that elusive jump from NME to The Sun.

But was it too much too soon? I believe it was. Like it or not Sputnik was a tabloid wet dream waiting to happen.

I eventually became great friends with JSPs now ex-husband, **Frank Cvitanovitch** (ex ice hockey player and film director) and he became a welcome benefactor offering sage advice. He was a wonderful man and we used to play snooker together every Monday at one stage, but that's another story. He was to direct the last ever Sputnik video some years in the future.

[Chapter 7...]

CHAPTER 7: A Still-Unlimited Supply

We certainly played it well and soon the whole media was catching on to Sigue Sigue Sputnik. Fast. Well they would do wouldn't they. I'd built it brilliantly. All those hours planning, finding the future stars, being fanatical about detail, the 6 foot tall female roadies, Mad Max in Blade Runner and to cap it all a celebrity couple (in the days when you actually had to be talented at something to be a celebrity). Sputnik was **the greatest movie about to open....** So when the media finally take a look, boy was there a lot to see and write about.

The planets were aligned for us like they are maybe once in a lifetime. My Sputnik vision, that dream I'd had all that time ago was about to become a household name and I hadn't paused to take a breath for months. Knowing how fast the pace was gathering, it occurred to me that we had better sign a huge deal quick and get a record out.

I was already lawyered up. **Brian Carr,** one of the most formidable music lawyers, lawyer to **The Clash, Spandau, Sade,** the list was endless, was the man. He looked like **Abraham Lincoln** and his office was in **Staple Inn,** a real magical olde worlde legal land. I liked the juxtaposition of very old and very new. I looked and I loved it. Perfect, we were in Dicken's territory and I certainly had Great Expectations...

And Brian knew we were holding all the cards with a pretty perfect hand. A phenomena was about to explode and that is very sexy which is why everyone wanted in. And although my prime concern was not financial, I honestly wasn't that interested in money in those days, Brian knew to go in and get the biggest deal possible.

[Continue...]

TJ and Magenta arrive for a meeting

Oh HOW those were the days in the record industry. It was like the **Wild West,** and even though you knew the bad guys would screw you eventually, you went in to rob them of as much upfront cash as possible before they did.

Those days are gone now for so many reasons and I don't need to tell you how it happened and why all the big games are over. In retrospect, knowing what I now know and how extraordinary that moment was in my life, I should have just signed **the million pounds publishing deal** (and we were definitely offered them) and moved to **San Tropez** double-quick while I had the chance.....but that could never have been. After all it had taken to get me to this moment, there was no question of take the money and run, we were definitely in for the long haul - or so I thought....

We signed, as was my dream, part of the script, to **E.M.I.** England's finest. Corner stone. Beatles, Pistols. Manchester Square here I come. And did we get 4 million pounds? Well not quite.....

Journalist Chris Salewitz had randomly plucked that figure out of the air for a piece he was writing about us in the Sunday Times and four million pounds translated in to six million dollars, so we became the **"six million dollar band'** which appealed to me because I loved "Six Million Dollar Man", the tv series in America starring Lee Majors. As usual I didn't stop to think of the implications of this new boast and the type of headlines it would generate.

What a day. And I was the "manager" too. Better spend some of the advance and get myself **a Brian Epstein suit,** get **Gekko'd** up ready. Shame I was only ACTING the part of being a business killer. Doing it really well too. But here's the thing and allow me a little poetic license here, it was like being **Steve Jobs** with a rock band, the mad brilliant inventor but most definitely NOT an **Alan Klein** or **Malcolm McLaren, interested only in the deal and the money and the 'scam'.** I did **not** know this though at the time, and there was no one there to advise me that by acting the part I was playing a very dangerous game with all that I had created. It was too late by then, I had taken on that role and I was pumped, I was confident, **I was invincible.....**

EMI had a great team, **Dave Ambrose, Ray Still,** head of marketing, **David Munns** even the head of EMI loved us, loved me. I could talk them into anything because they believed so utterly in me and the mischief was such fun, such japes, so plausible, and, most of all we were in the ascendent to success, that elusive Valhalla seldom glimpsed by the other normals on the label. And I sold them the story brilliantly. I was the Saatchi of Rock.

We were still gigging during these heady times. Everything we touched turned to gold and we had not even made the record yet. Just those 10 demos made on a 4 track Portastudio in Magentas sitting room.

[Continue...]

We'd had a couple of abortive attempts trying to record Love Missile but could never get close to the anarchic dub sound of the Portastudio demos. We needed a producer. I tried to contact my old friend **Prince** - it's too violent he said (well, a flunky said). **Bowie** - wasn't in, well didn't reply anyway. (how weird then that 20 years later he records a version of **Love Missile** himself. Amazing, Bowie changed my life with **Ziggy** and now he's singing my song - that old cliche "you couldn't make it up' exists for a very good reason.

But the main man was always going to be **Georgio Moroder.** How many times had we played the **Scarface** soundtrack album. And the **Midnight Express** album. **Donna Summer's "I feel Love'?** Don't even get me started.... So, before you know it, given these golden times, me, Degville and X are standing in the actual studio in Munich where all those great sounds were made, playing Georgio the demo video. And he LOVED it and agreed that he would come to London asap to record the single.

We played an amazing gig at **Abbey Road studios** which we filmed as well, everything - back stage too. Clips from this appear in the final video for Missile. A horror film 'Friday the 13th style. Degville wears an Ice Hockey mask on the flyer for the show. Does it incite violence? I'm not sure but it sure came in handy when the bottles started flying later during our first French show. I adopted it as my look, realising fast that it was safer!

Just in time too. We played the **TransMusicalles** festival in **Rennes** just before Christmas word was obviously out about this **Clockwork Orange** styled group glorifying designer violence. You want war France? That beat we had pummelled the audience and tt worked. Things were getting scary. I loved it.

I'm creating more and more T shirts for my image now by painting straight on to the blank shirt. **Rambo Child, World War 4 and Atari** became classic slogans. I can wear my catch phrases. Only thing is you can't wash them or the paint comes off!

Actually some wag had printed some pirate T-Shirts with the legend "Saatchi **Saatchi Sputnik"** on the front - I wish I had thought of that. Thing is I WAS hanging out with **Charles Saatchi** by now in real life because of JSP.

He loved the futurism and the game of it all. We were playing Scrabble together.

Degville looked amazing by now, evolving, becoming more and more larger than life. X has the biggest quiff this side of **Little Richard** and Yana out-does **Jayne Mansfield.** Ooh Aah, a pink guitar!!!

Life was great that Christmas and we had it all to play for.

[Chapter 8...]

CHAPTER 8: Love That Missile...

It was new year and we hit the ground running...or is that flying? Expectation was so high and growing bigger day by day. We needed to make a classic record.

With EMI's money in the bank now Sputnik HQ was a hive of activity and a hive of employees all on PAYE. Magenta was working full time for us now and even had an assistant, a new Ultravixen, **Victoria Kyme.** Yes two PR's full time for just one band! The press was becoming almost uncontrollable as the expectation of that first record increased daily. Was it hype? I didn't think so. Yes, I was aware that a great photo, a photo that told a story was the most important element. And boy we had great photos. I knew every time a Sputnik photo dropped on a bored picture editors desk at some paper or magazine it screamed Print ME! Print me Big, Give me the COVER!! But I believed in the band and the ideas, so I felt people wanted to write about us because it WAS such a great story.

Brian Carr had suggested we use **Touche Ross** as our accountants - they normally are the accountants for huge corporations. Well you can see what I was thinking... Huge. And it was all done straight with the tax man too, we were like the Department of fucking Industry already! It all fitted the image and of course the name Touche Ross became part of the story.

I didn't think about the amount of money that was hemorrhaging out of the bank account already, before we'd made a record. Oh, also, what do you think my huge accountants first bill was like just three months later. Thats right you guessed it. HUGE. **But hey, we are unstoppable!!**

Moroder flew in first class with his programmer and engineer and we all set up camp at **Westside Studios** just up the road from **392b HQ.** We decorated the studio with TV sets playing the Terminator and Movie Posters everywhere

If Magenta knew about Press then JSP knew about **Television** and television was chasing us now. A new series by LWT called **South of Watford** wanted to make a whole half hour program about the creation of the band. I got to tell the story to camera and they got to film in the Pink studio, in YAYA and at the record company.

It was a story of the age. Presented by **Hugh Laurie....** you know him now as the **House** Doctor. There were countless other maverick film makers from all over the world following the band as well. What an archive I would have in years to come I thought.

[Continue...]

The day after the documentary aired in the UK I was getting a cab to EMI and not recognising me, the cabbie turned and asked had I seen that Sputnik group on the telly last night?..."He's got `is head screwed on that Tony James" he assured me!

The single was sounding amazing and pretty much following closely the demo arrangement. This time the now trademark spiralling dub effects were perfect. I wired up the VHS video machine in the studio and we laid on the voices from **Clockwork Orange, Blade Runner, Scarface, The Terminator and Rambo.** They sounded amazing adding such dark atmosphere and the opening beat from A Clockwork Orange music by **Walter Carlos was a perfect start to your first single.** The hairs still rise on the back of my neck when I hear it. It was pure Alchemy. The poster too, a homage to the original film poster looked SO powerful when it went up on walls all over Britain.

This was our moment! The advance orders were amazing, hundreds of thousands. Papers were running bets on whether this would be the fastest selling single of all time...

When the record was released we put the various brilliant 12" mixes that Moroder did in bags to look like those **Japanese imports** that you buy, always paying over the odds for just because they have that paper strip around the sleeve. I'd loved those and always bought them myself as a fan. Except this time I did them in **Russian, Spanish and Italian** too. The day the record came out I felt a shiver of anticipation as I walked down London's premier shopping street, **Oxford Street.** There, outside every record store was a queue... for our record. All those years planning, believing, dreaming.... It Worked.

And it was an amazing record. Everything we'd hoped for... and it was rocketing to the top of the charts all over Europe. Those were heady weeks and for a moment in rock history we were the hottest band in the world, with so much promise, so much still to come.....

That was probably one of the most exciting moments in my career to date and understandably I felt on top of the world.

[Continue..]

Straight after the studio I was on to the ideas for the promotion video. This was going to be special too - no straight pop video for Sputnik then. I convinced EMI to make a promo clip in the form of a movie trailer with that deep voice over booming out. And I assured EMI it wouldn't matter, but I was definitely **not** having the music of the single in the clip either. Heresy or Genius? You tell me!

It was only much later that I relented to EMI's pleading that we recut the trailer into a conventional 3 minute promo clip. Yes, I let them have the music in it this time. Because I didn't care by then as I was already off on the next big idea!

One day, as the record was already at the top of the charts, selling 60,000 copies a day in the UK, I got a call to come in and see the **Head of Business affairs** in his office. It was on a high floor I'd never been to before at EMI Manchester Square, where the big corporate boys lived.

On his desk was laid out the posters and all the press advertising and all the different copies of the single, looking great. "We do have clearance for all these samples I assume" he said looking me straight in the dark glasses pleadingly.....

"What **does clearance mean"?** I asked honestly. And then it dawned on both of us.

In this whole process, the movie references, the imagery, the actual voices of **Pacino, Arnie, Stallone, McDowell...** NO ONE had thought about whether it was legal to just put them on a record. No ONE!!!! Not Moroder, A&R, our lawyers, the Press or record reviewers. It just sounded great and no one had done it on a commercial single before that was now at number 1. **Stanley** madman **Kubric** himself had been shopping in his local high street and heard the record blasting out from a record store. The film was BANNED for Christsakes in the UK, Kubric had himself withdrawn it. Wish I could have been there and seen his face! I would have talked him into it, def, no problem - this was Concept Art Stanley, you love that don't you?

Corporate EMI man held his head in his hands wearily. A lot of shit was about to hit the fan. A lot of really really nightmare expensive shit. The bill is still lounging on Sputniks giant, no, GIGANTIC unrecouped position today, hundreds of thousands, even though we sold millions of records."This is a high tab project" I assured him "don't worry....we're gonna be millionaires!"

Yea, AND it sounds great I said as I left. Damn - bit of a minor glitch. They had to redo all the samples for the USA release and it sounded shit. Hmmm. I've got about a hundred other samples I was just about to put all over the album too. I'm not ringing **Clint or Cruise.** Oh well, lets get a drink.

Champagne everyone? We're a success boys.....

[Chapter 9...]

Chapter 9:

Too Much Sex and Violence ...Too Soon?

I'm amazed I didn't have a nervous breakdown. Every day there was so much for me to do, interviews, press decisions, EMI meetings, designing artwork, posters, Euro trips to promote the single in Germany and Spain, where ever. I was taking control of everything in my mad fanatical way, ignoring the others (who were out having a great time living the rockstar life by now remember). I'd made a big thing about the reasons **WE** managed ourselves, that there was no big Svengali manipulating us, we did the business...but when I look back. You know, if ONLY there HAD have been a Svengali with experience maybe he would have saved me from myself. **I needed a Brian Epstein or Peter Grant to save me from my worst excesses.**

If I look at how it was all going back then, would I have done things differently? Probably not. Fame and success is like doing the best drugs in the world and you're so high no one can tell you different. After all it was all working perfectly to plan wasn't it? In that moment the masterplan had propelled us to being the biggest most talked and written about band in the world.

But...

Should we have held back? Held back with the press, the endless interviews, the bragging about the genius of it all. I can't blame Magenta - she was doing the best job in the world and what I asked for. At that time I had got so good at trotting out the story I was talking in **virtual slogans, talking in headlines** every time. They loved it, it was terrific copy. The journalist said hello and I'd talk for an hour in an unbroken stream, so keen was I to not miss a single important step in the story.

[Continue...]

Megalomaniac? It never occurred to me that I was also building up a mass of resentment out there, and it was building daily waiting to get me and my baby back, Big Time once I fucked up in any way. We didn't ever even try to keep the mystique once we we were out there. We flaunted every lascivious and brilliant detail. And what a story... like the most exciting film you're ever gonna see. Like **Tarantino** with **Pulp Fiction** I never once thought I should keep something in reserve for the sequel. I gave it everything, every last bullet... like **Al Pacino** in the closing stages of **Scarface.** You think it can't fail, we were too big, too strong, too brilliant.....

And I had a UK tour to play. Press at fever pitch everyone wanted to see this band and we were selling out everywhere. As JSP said to me at the time, It was the first time she'd been out with someone more famous than her.

The Sputnik monster, UltraVixens, Tabloid Journalists in tow, went on the road. What a colorful circus we were. Ready to Roar.

On the Second date of the tour the catch phrase of **UltraViolence/ Designer Violence** became all to real. We were booked to play at **Reading University** and those students were ready to explain to me why I wasn't as smart as I thought I was... with bottles. The gig was like that scene in the Battle of Hastings when the archers arrows come over in waves, except these were bottles. Out of the dry ice and smoke came bottles raining down. It was hard to play and tempers were fraying. But you love us right?

Ray Mayhew, always a hot head whose character as the leering maniac but brilliant drummer I had nurtured, caught one bottle and threw it violently back into the crowd.. and a fan was hospitalised.

Mayhew was arrested and charged with wounding on three counts. The tabloids had a new splash on Britain's most notorious press worthy band. We really were the new **Sex Pistols** now. We, meanwhile were treating it all as a bit of a laugh. Ray had plenty of other court cases pending already and I printed "Ray **Mayhew is Innocent"** T-Shirts as a nod to **Sid,** with his court appearances on the back like tour dates. The Judge told me off for smirking in the witness box and not taking it seriously. Ray got a bit of a telling off and a smacked bottom, made the 10.00 News and triumphantly rejoined the tour in Dunstable to a huge sell out crowd. It felt all so **Rolling Stones,** so rebellious.

We got his lawyers bill soon enough of course.

That Sunday I went to the newsagents to find the front page splash on the **News of The World.** "Horror **of the Sputnik maniac"** it screamed. We'd gone from colourful glam genius's to "threat to the nations youth" in a week. Years later I had dinner with **David Montgomery** the then editor of **NoTW.** He said it was a slow week and they just thought oh why not, they make great copy. The upcoming very lucrative tour of **Japan** got cancelled because of it, they weren't keen on flying out a band who threw bottles at their fans. Thanks David.

[Cor[redacted]]

But I have to say still it was intoxicating fun. You are getting to live out fantasies you'd only read about in books and the lives of other groups I'd considered notorious. And notorious is always sexy.

Gary Bushell an old, boozy faced, punk journalist now writing for **the Sun** was on tour with us and Degville and Mayhew often drove to the next gig in his big gangster style Jaguar. He would sit at breakfast making up copy like "Martin simulates sex on stage" and phone it in after phoning up his pet **M.P Terry Dicks** for an outraged quote. I became disappointed if I didn't read about us in The Sun next day. The band was so individually recognisable that the Sun ran a great cartoon, really capturing the different personalities of the 5 members.

We are now in the game where you play one tabloid off against the other. This is really playing with fire. **John Blake,** a friend, was editor of **The Mirror's** rival Pop column. Denied access, he came out against the group and concocted equally outrageous counter stories... like saying that Martin came on and told racist jokes, that the London show was half empty. These invented stories, were ultimately really harmful. I can remember him phoning me on tour saying he would give us the front cover if we'd agree to the story that **21st Century Boy** featured Deg nailed to a **burning crucifix of TV screens** and would be released on **Good Friday, Easter...** great story actually.

The Sun countered with an offer that if we would break the Wapping strike and ride into the compound with **Sam Fox** on the back of a **Chieftan tank** we could have the cover. It was a slow news week I guess. I love **Kelvin Mckenzie** still and loved his book about his time Editing the Sun. What japes it all was we thought at the time...

The trouble is that every story printed, true or false, goes into the file and becomes part of the overall myth. So I had spent all this time carefully crafting every part of my Movie and now other people were randomly adding scenes of their own. You could not tell myth from real. By the time we got to the USA, the idea that we could not play and **mimed on stage** had become one of the big scandal points. From driving the story myself I was now on the back foot. And this "miming" business was ultimately to hurt the band playing gigs. How had it happened?

The tabloids had written that at one gig we had stopped playing but the music continued... HOW? The whole point of those years of rehearsal was that we were completely live.

I guess it was a combination of my glib headline quote that "neither of the two drummers could play" yes, but that was WHEN WE MET THEM ....and the fact that to play the samples on stage in this pre sampler/ computer era, Yana would have to load a cassette into the machine for each song to play all the movie voice snippets. Did it look as if she was loading up a backing track? We never hid the cassette machine as movie sounds and voices were part of the bands sound live but you can see how people got the wrong impression.

[Continue...]

These were early times and nowadays so many acts especially Rap bands just rap over a pre recorded backing track. But back then it was taboo. I thought that too, but I couldn't control the way this looked. The more I denied it, the more they printed it again. By the time I did my first appearances on American TV I was billed as the **"Man who swindled 6 million dollars out of EMI for a band who couldn't play....."**

This was not in the script. Ill winds were gathering force and I never saw them coming.

Because I had an album to make.

We had arranged to go to L.A after the tour. Recording in L.A.! Another dream come true. I pinched myself and forgot about all this negative press nonsense...

Oh, one other "on the road story" before we leave the tour..... **Assassinate Thatcher the Prime Minister!**

Two girls came into my hotel room one night, well... ok... um... stayed in my room one night. At a critical moment they said that if I gave them **£20,000** that they would kill the **Prime Minister** and give Sputnik the film rights for our next video... er cant we talk about this in 10 seconds time I said, I'm not really focused, a man with an erection will say yes to anything ultimately... anyway, next day I was joking about it and my lawyer overheard... he called the police immediately. Next thing **ten Special Branch** men were in my room questioning me. In detail. Every detail.

This is madness but true... a press blackout was placed on the story thank God - Janet would never buy my excuse - and they looked for the girls, by coming on tour with us. This is suddenly more than just a laugh now. The girls contacted me again back in London... "We are in a hotel paid for by the **News of the World,** drinking champagne... they love the story... and by the way, that night we taped the whole thing...". Ever had that sinking feeling?

Eventually Special Branch caught up with them and it was the last I heard of it thank GOD... but I still go cold thinking of all those Special Branch guys listening to that tape and transcribing it...

It livened up the last dates on that U.K tour though. Sex and Violence. All Rock and Roll bases covered then. The tour continued in our amateur-like way, with our crew of UltraVixens, all looking the part but totally unprepared and not knowing what the hell they were doing. But that was our thing, larger than life actors learning on the job! **Jessica Vixen,** the sound mixer was driving the bands tour bus at 100 miles an hour as well as mixing the sound. No one mentioned to me she was out of it on a mixture of **dangerous drugs.** Everyone of the cast screeching their heads off. What had I created? I would sit in the tour bus regarding my cast of crazies with a directors eye. **I'm amazed we did not all get killed** and there were some hairy moments on the M6. Now that would have been a story.. After one stupendous hit record too. Perfect. On with the movie.

I wonder now what the others were feeling and thinking, my actors placed in my increasingly out-of-control movie. It simply never occurred to me to ask or to wonder. They seemed to be having the time of their lives, growing every day more and more into the roles I had created for them although it did concern me slightly that they appeared to be more focused on being stars than being musicians, but who could blame them - that is why I had chosen them in the first place....

Meanwhile I was on the portable phone and planning the next scene.

[Chapter 10..]

CHAPTER 10: Real Movie La La Land

First rule of the Svengali/trickster is always have the album to rush out on the back of your big hit in order to get maximum cash in. I was not even thinking about this. I was rushing about having a great time, thinking up the next great marketing idea, jape and photo op. I wasn't ever thinking about the next song title or tune. But I was confident the 10 we already had would get us through till the end of 1987..... here I was still trying to manage the group, which was an ever expanding, egotistical monster. **My Frankenstein** was in Party mode.

And there was too much to do. I never stopped to breathe that year or to take stock of the bigger picture and where we were heading. It was all too intoxicating, all going too well and it's so easy to get carried away when everyone wants you, wants your opinion on everything and you are in the papers every day.

Also, there was a gradual shift in perception of me, from musician to money man. Obviously the suit and the briefcase, which I had considered ironic, didn't help, nor did the "Fleece the World" T-shirt which again had been my ironic twist on the Band Aid "Save the World".

That "Fleece the world" t-shirt - worn so "fuck you" at the time - was coming back to haunt me. No one saw the irony, its play on the music industry using musical charity events to further careers of their ailing artists by access to a worldwide television audience. I had always exposed the trickery and cynicism of the business as part of our marketing, yet that T-shirt made me look like the cynic. **"His Motto is fleece the world"** prefaced every **American TV** show on the band. I was portrayed as the arch manipulator fleecing the fans. They were so wrong, what I meant and what I had intended on that T-shirt was **fleece the industry** - the evil empire - not the fans.

[Continue...]

Based around a presentation Tony James gave to the assembled brethren of the Advertising Industry, this clip expands on the concept and vision of Sigue Sigue Sputnik that made the group like nothing else. By now a fully formed megalomanic, watch as Tony James defends the t-shirt slogan "Fleece the World".... Monkeys or Sex Pistols? Art or Ideals?

[Continue..]

Above all I loved the music and the fans that loved it too, but I was not perceptive enough to understand how easily these things could be misconstrued, and there was no one there capable of reining me in, advising me of when to keep my mouth shut. I thought I knew it all and I certainly sounded like I did by then, but in reality, up against the big guys in power in the music industry, the ones you never see who can make or break you in a moment, I wasn't even in the game and worse, the game I WAS playing, the goading and the jeering at them was starting to seriously piss them off and that should have been the biggest fucking rule written in the red notebook back in Shepherd's Market - **NEVER piss off the suits in the industry if you want to survive.** It seemed I still had a lot to learn...

To make things worse, the band were inevitably reading this money stuff written about me in the Red Tops, seeing the images and talking amongst themselves. The harder they partied, the more I was the one doing all the talking to the press and the less time we had to sit down and hang out together and actually communicate as we had done at the start. If anything I was the worst communicator within the band at that time. It wasn't that I didn't care, it was that no one told me how to, or that I should.

Too busy and too distracted, and the band -- like everyone else, were starting to believe the hype, believe what they were reading that implied I was all about the money.

That Fleece the World T-shirt did more damage than I could ever have imagined, and even worse, it sowed the seeds within the band that I was fleecing them as well as everybody else. It made it look as if the group was all about the money, about getting the biggest deals when the sad reality was that even then, it was and still is, EMI that made the money.

We all got paid the same -- a paltry sum considering how successful we were at the time -- and I didn't get a penny more than anyone else, then or to this day.

I was not taking any sort of management fee -- usually around 20% off the top of the deal -- nor was I earning anything for all the hours I was putting in to the ideas and concepts while the others partied the days and nights away. I am not resentful about this but I do hate the misconception that I somehow got more financially out of this than the rest of the band. That is simply not true - in fact it seems ridiculous when I look back that I didn't insist that there was a proper manager in place before we went out to do the deal. This was partly down to the fact that me and Billy had been so ripped off in Generation X, both by the managers and by the record companies and I was determined that I wasn't going to let that happen with Sputnik, but what it also shows is now naive I was to even think I was capable of controlling that part of the band and in reality, how hopeless I was at playing the real game with the big boys.

[Con... ...]

Moroder had now moved to live in L.A and we flew out to work on the next record only days after the end of the UK tour. I went via NYC.... by **Concorde** of course.

When I was a kid growing, up my father worked in the aircraft industry, working for so many years on that beautiful aeroplane and even though he never flew in it himself, he was so incredibly proud when I did. I loved Concorde and every moment of my time was precious was how I justified it. I sure flew a lot on EMI's dollar, we all did, but of course we all paid in the end.

Neal X had flown out to Los Angeles a week early to supervise the programming of the album tracks. I felt as if we were in **Hammer of the Gods** the **Zeppelin** book. There's something so magical about that limo ride in from LAX to the city, listening to American radio.

The station **KROQ** had been mad for **Love Missile** and were playing it all the time. We hooked up with **Pam Turbov** and **Matt Dike,** from the record label "**Delicious Vinyl**" who were both big fans of the band. They came to the group's first rehearsals in LA some months later. Matt went on to produce a huge hit "**Do the Wild Thing**" for **Tone Loc** in his bedroom studio.

However good it felt to be in the city of dreams, it felt also very strange to be creating Sputnik's neon nightmare in the Californian sunshine.

Everything went really fast. **Moroder, the genius producer** taught us so much, not least about working strict hours in the studio, fueled by endless expressos and the fact that he had such great people working with him, made it all look so easy. We met **Sparks** there and Moroder was recording the **Top Gun** soundtrack at the same time in the other studio next door. I still swear he nicked the tune for **Take my Breath Away** from our **Sex Bomb Boogie!!**

My biggest problem was the **movie samples element** used so brilliantly on **"Love Missile."** Now the lawyer hounds were watching my every move and at the very hint of a recognisable sample everyone jumped all over me.

We put ourselves in Moroder's hands. I had no choice because the clock was ticking.

I bought loads of Japanese Robot toys in **Japan town** in L.A which is where the sleeve design came from with its manga / Robot toy design. I was always on the look out for anything new.

The album may have been recorded in a rush but as a live band we were match fit , having played the songs continuously for the past year and knowing the demos inside out. But still as we drove back to **LAX airport** I left **Hollywood** with the beginning of a heavy feeling in my heart that I was to get to know so well. I was having the time of my life, but there just wasn't time to get everything perfect anymore. I was gradually loosing control of my baby but for my own sanity I had to let it go, to be less pedantic about every minute detail and to care less. Any artist will tell you that is fatal.

Back in the UK we shot a video for **21st Century Boy,** ready for it's release in May. The five years of ideas and plundering that I had funneled into the Love Missile promo were not around for the second single. Yes we could play with the **Sputnik Corporation / Big Business** fantasy and we hired Limos and helicopters to illustrate a day in the life of those fun loving, consumer electronic Sputniks, but the video lacked a true narrative which had informed Missile.

I'd done so many TV shows all over Europe by now, talked so much that I lived the Love Missile story in my sleep now. How could we possibly top that with the next one? No one else seemed worried. Not that I asked. Someone asked me the other day what I thought about the others at that time and I had to say, as I have said earlier, that I didn't think about them, not at all, except if they were late, which was every time, and then of course no one said a thing.

[Chapter 11. .]

CHAPTER 11: 21st Century Boys

We went to **Spain** where the single was still number one and we were treated like the Visionary Gods I knew we (well I anyway) were. The record company guys all loved it and everywhere we went EMI operatives were having the time of their lives too. They got more out of it and drunker than we did. Back in Madrid's most expensive hotel in true "Stardust" movie fashion, Degville wouldn't leave his suite to go to the TV Show and we had to do it without him. For some reason he and Mayhew had had some kind of fight and Martin was distraught. All grist to the mill I thought, nothing like a bit of internal violence to keep everyone on their toes. As usual there was something I was not seeing, or perhaps not wanting to see...

At the end of May we flew out to **Ibiza** for some rest, climaxing by playing the opening night of the legendary **Ku Club.** A prestigious event that the hippest band each year was asked to play and the deal was you got to stay for the week at Ibiza's best hotel "Pikes", owned by the flamboyant **Tony Pike** who was like a gangster from a **James Bond Movie.** Pikes is where **Wham** filmed the video of **Club Tropicana.** The **England football squad** were also staying there and they became quite enamoured by the statuesque UltraVixens. (My lips are super-injunctioned).

At the club we hung out with **Roman Polanski,** JSP threw a tray of drinks at Neal X's latest model girlfriend, Magenta is wearing dark glasses, and they dyed the swimming pool blood red at the Ku club as a suitable setting for us to play. It was all business as usual for the band... or so I thought...

[Continue...]

A couple of hours before we are due to go on stage, drama erupts. **Degville** says he's **leaving the band and he's not performing that night**. I am dumbstruck. Why on earth..? How am I going to get around this one I think, a million possibilities running through my mind. But mostly I'm thinking WHY? Martin looks at me tearfully. To my complete surprise I discover that Martin has become romantically involved with a person very close to the band, but tonight the relationship has turned sour. Martin is a broken man, and I -- for once -- am at a loss for words.

Does that tell you more about me though, than about him? My complete and utter blindness to what is going on around me, so focused am I on the next move. It seems that everyone knew about the relationship for months except me. Happily the two of them worked out their differences at the eleventh hour and we played in front of the blood red pool to an ecstatic crowd who were -- thankfully -- completely oblivious to just how close they had come to hearing the band without the singer.

This episode reminded me again that I was not really a **Colonel Tom Parker,** or a **Tony DeFries,** manipulating my young charges with psychological and Machiavellian cunning. I was the brilliant ideas and marketing man creating my movie but I was certainly no good at being the director, too insensitive to control the actors, too lacking in empathy to feel who these people actually were, how they lived their real lives and what they ultimately wanted out of it all. I chose not to see, not to care about the real life stuff, having created the monster, I was too intent on keeping it alive.

Degville with Roman Polanski in Ibiza

Because of the massive expectation for the second single I got asked to appear on the Terry Wogan primetime evening chat show on BBC 1. This was a real big deal - all the major movie stars went on Wogan. It went out live to 16 million viewers nightly and it would be a real step up for us into mainstream television.

Maybe I could put things back on track, explain a few things I thought, and was secretly thrilled to be asked. My parents would be impressed at last... I was really nervous as I waited in the green room for my call.

Then I heard Wogan introducing me and my head was swimming as I walked into the bright TV lights. I could just hear him saying "and now in the tradition of Colonel Tom Parker and Malcolm McLaren....." Who the hell is he talking about?

Twenty First Century Boy had come out with massive pre orders in its **"crucifix made of TV sets"** sleeve (I got the idea watching the sixties film "Privilege"). It rocketed to number 20 in the charts.... and then suddenly, for the first time ever since we had appeared.... it stalled.

The head of EMI marketing telephoned me in Ibiza just before we left. I was already frazzled from the week's events but it was the first time I had heard him slightly loosing his nerve.

"I'm dying out there" he said from his car, "I just don't know what's going wrong". And I can tell you.... neither did I.

Moroder had done a brilliant job again with the 12" remixes for the single. But when the album mixes arrived we were freaked because it just was not how we saw the record.

We'd lived with our dream of the sound for two years, had it perfectly in our heads and this sounded... well... "weak" is the only way I could describe it.

My worst fears since that rushed moment in L.A. had come true.

Neal and I left for L.A again, after dropping Degville back in London because he and Magenta were about to leave for Japan to do press. What could possibly go wrong there?

[Continue...]

I'd got used to doing most of the heavyweight interviews on my own and now found it increasingly frustrating if I was ever paired with Degville, who talked like a character out of a **John Walter's** movie. Although I'd found it funny at first, I was now becoming increasingly irritated at the inanity of it all. I wonder now if he could sense my irritation? He just seemed so far removed from that sweet, funny guy I used to meet off the train at Euston station on a Friday night in those early days. Now a swaggering, bitchy, spiteful, over-confident ego had enveloped him and he was becoming this new person for real, with only the very occasional glimpses still of the old Martin.

But who could blame him? ...the seeds had always been there, right from the start, and I had watered them well, grown him into this new Martin and now people were hanging on to his every word. How could he not think he was 'fabulous me'? And I still wasn't listening.

A classic Degville quote was splashed on the front of a girls teen magazine... **"I hate all women, especially fat ones".** Not good Martin... not good at all. Even I knew that saying this sort of thing was asking to alienate a big part of our core record buyers.

And now we were unleashing him on the unsuspecting Japanese press... but he was with Magenta who would hopefully control the worst of his verbal excesses. Magenta and I were still incredibly close and I trusted her judgement more than anyone else's... knew that she, above all people, had not just my interests at heart, but the interests of the band that we had spent so long discussing all that time ago in Pindock Mews. I put Degville out of my mind and flew once again into the L.A. sunshine.

Once back in Moroder's studio, we quickly mixed our own version's of all the songs (some of which later turned up on the **Sci Fi Sex Stars** EP and various remix compilations). I'd taken to having my video camera with me at all times and whenever I heard anyone with an interesting voice I got them to say famous lines while I recorded them. I was trying to build up a catalogue of those catch phrases that are so recognisable but wouldn't give the lawyers a heart attack. So obviously it couldn't be **Clint Eastwood** saying **"Go Ahead make my day..."** it was a dentist on holiday I met in Ibiza... and it couldn't be **Arni** saying **"hasta la vista Baby"** it was the pizza guy at the studio.

The trouble is it's never as good. Obviously. It ultimately meant the records lost something magical. Moroder got mimics in **"but kid, honestly, if it ain't Pacino himself it don't have the swing..."**

Moroder listened to our work; we'd reduced the songs back to the original style of the demos and I'd sneaked a few thinly disguised movie samples on the tracks as well. As we left for LAX, he proclaimed he would remix the whole record again for a third time (for free to show how seriously he took it) and take "everyones ideas into account." So near...and yet still so far!

[C[redacted]]

CHAPTER 12: You are ....Human!

Back in the UK and Degville was back from Japan, where Magenta assured me they had all "loved" him. I had a vision of all those super-polite, respectful Japanese people meeting the new Martin and could only hope it was true. Here, it was business as usual and they may have been giving us a hard time in England but over in Germany they still really loved us and the single was being a huge hit. We were to fly to Munich for a live broadcast on the networks biggest pop TV show "Formula Eins"

Formula Eins loved Sputnik, even though on our previous visit, for their anniversary party, **Degville** and **Mayhew** had climbed on to the table which held the big, beautiful anniversary cake, destroyed it and everything around it and then got in a fight with **Matt Bianco.** But happily the Germans viewed this as just business and as we know success gets you everywhere, however badly you behave, so back we were going to go.

The plan was that the band would fly in to Munich and be picked up by two helicopters, three of us in each, to land just outside the TV studios. Then, there would be six motorcycles waiting to drive each of us, fully dressed and ready to perform directly on to the set. Spectacular. Two songs on the biggest show in Germany.

Timing, they assured me, was everything as it was all live. Not a problem...

[Continue...]

I was waiting at Heathrow looking forward to the exciting day ahead. Except that **Neal X,** normally totally reliable, had gone out the night before we left, got drunk and had not come home yet. Degville arrived at Heathrow looking great but without his passport. Ray had just overslept. So a pathetic three member Sputnik arrived in Munich. Two motorbikes each as me, Yana and Chris tried to bluff it out. Fortunately I couldn't understand German because the producers seemed quite excited with this economy sized Sputnik and not in a good way.

How Rock and Roll was that we said later, trying to laugh it off, and besides we probably don't need a hit there anyway....

Undaunted I was still brimming with ideas, full of slogans, full of confidence although for the first time I felt a slight vulnerability. The press that had previously lapped up every word as genius was now more .....skeptical.

We had to cancel most of the upcoming UK Album tour as those "fleeced" fans were not buying tickets and all that press about us miming had started to put people off. I thought I could ward off everything by a flood of new ideas and the planned futuristic extravaganza of the upcoming **Royal Albert Hall** show and its satellite TVs.

Next on the agenda was **ADVERTISING!** As the sound of television was part of the sound of the eighties, I wanted to have an unbroken stream of music and Ad jingles on the disc. it was like **The Who** did on their 60's album **The Who Sell Out.** But it proved hard to get major sponsors to be involved with a group glorifying violence in the vein of **Clockwork Orange.** But we bluffed it out with a few good Ads and Moroder's final mixes were back and I was ready to go with the album release.

I was becoming **power crazed all over again** as the new ideas coursed through me and I was already on to the next scheme. I thought we could get advertiser's to sponsor a single so it could be sold at next to nothing or given away in the shops. I thought I could fix everything by throwing another blizzard of ideas into the arena.

Unfortunately I had to give a **press conference** to announce the change of plans, to try and put an upbeat spin and hide the fact that we'd cancelled nearly all the upcoming UK tour dates due to poor ticket sales. The spin was that it was to be all video walls now and we could not take that to ordinary venues, and would concentrate on one big show in capital cities. Of course.

I gave an emotional performance asking the press monster to stop hurting us -- well me actually. Maybe it touched a few hearts and watching a video of that day at the **British film institute** with my gang and JSP around me, I looked human for the first time, standing at the lectern with my trusty brick-like, iconic mobile phone by my side and looking the journalist pack in the eye, trying to hide my emotion.

It was a tough day and I thought I did okay... but it was too late, as in all good horror films, the scent was up and the jackals could smell blood...

[Continue...]

For any other band, **100,000 sales** of 21st C Boy would have been seen as a success... but after my fantasy number one movie that was Love Missile - and all that it released on the world - ANYTHING seemed a failure. How could anything live up to that, let alone surpass it?

Luckily there were plenty of other territories where the latest single was a hit and we did the round's of all the TV shows in Europe. In **Italy** we flew to **Rome** in a private jet to play **Berlesconi's** TV show. There were screaming fans as we arrived; it was still all happening there and I embraced Rome. Neal of course tried to get off with Berlesconi's daughter after the show. Like Degville, Neal had also grown a new persona and again it was super confident... but not spiteful and bitchy ...no, X had become this larger than life cheeky-chappy rock star, still a far cry from the quiet, shy boy who had answered the ad all that time ago, but a lot more palatable to be around.

It didn't work out with Berlesconi's daughter though - I think Neal had been hoping it was a case of like father like daughter, but he didn't stand a chance.

On the way home, as the jet landed at a private airport, I was starting to feel empowered again and recovered from that bruising press conference in London. **Vicky Kyme,** Magentas PR#2 was with us and left the airfield to go and see her sister **Penelope Kyme** who had just given birth to her son **Sebastian** at the **Portland hospital.** Little did I know as I waved Vicky off that evening that three years later I would meet Penelope myself at **Roger Taylor's, the drummer from Duran Duran's house,** fall madly in love for the first time in my entire life and we would eventually marry. The baby born that day is now my amazing son and Penelope and I have been together for over twenty years. Life changing stuff.

Tony on the MTV sofa

Just before the album came out in its Robot box cover, styled to look like a **Japanese transformer toy,** I had to go to New York for two weeks to be a **VJ on MTV.** Thank God JSP went with me because in my typically perverse style I refused to just introduce videos. I wanted it as a freaked out future chat show.. like **Max headroom...** and my face would only appear on a TV set in the host's chair.

We had to sit in the hotel room every night writing a script for each of the the next day's 2 hour show. It was a massive amount of work but a great intro into MTV. Not quite the two weeks hanging out in NYC partying I had planned, but I had the confidence then to try everything, **even chat show host** and JSP was brilliant, often writing the whole script for me.

While I was in New York for those two weeks and unable to leave the MTV gig, an important TV show in front of a huge festival in **Italy** came up... and remember, Italy was - at that point - still one of my good territories (X's behaviour in Rome had fortunately managed to pass unreported).

Like most Euro TV shows, this one was only miming one track... It was too good to miss, so Magenta agreed to go as me, complete with pink hair and the hockey mask on. She played the part of me perfectly, and it had nothing to do with her impersonating me when a **riot** erupted in the giant Roman amphitheater where the gig took place - very **Gladiator!** Poor Magenta got to see (and feel) what it's like to be **bottled off.** The press in the UK reported that we were miming again (even though we'd been asked to by the show) and they also reported that I couldn't even be bothered to turn up for the gig.

[ ]

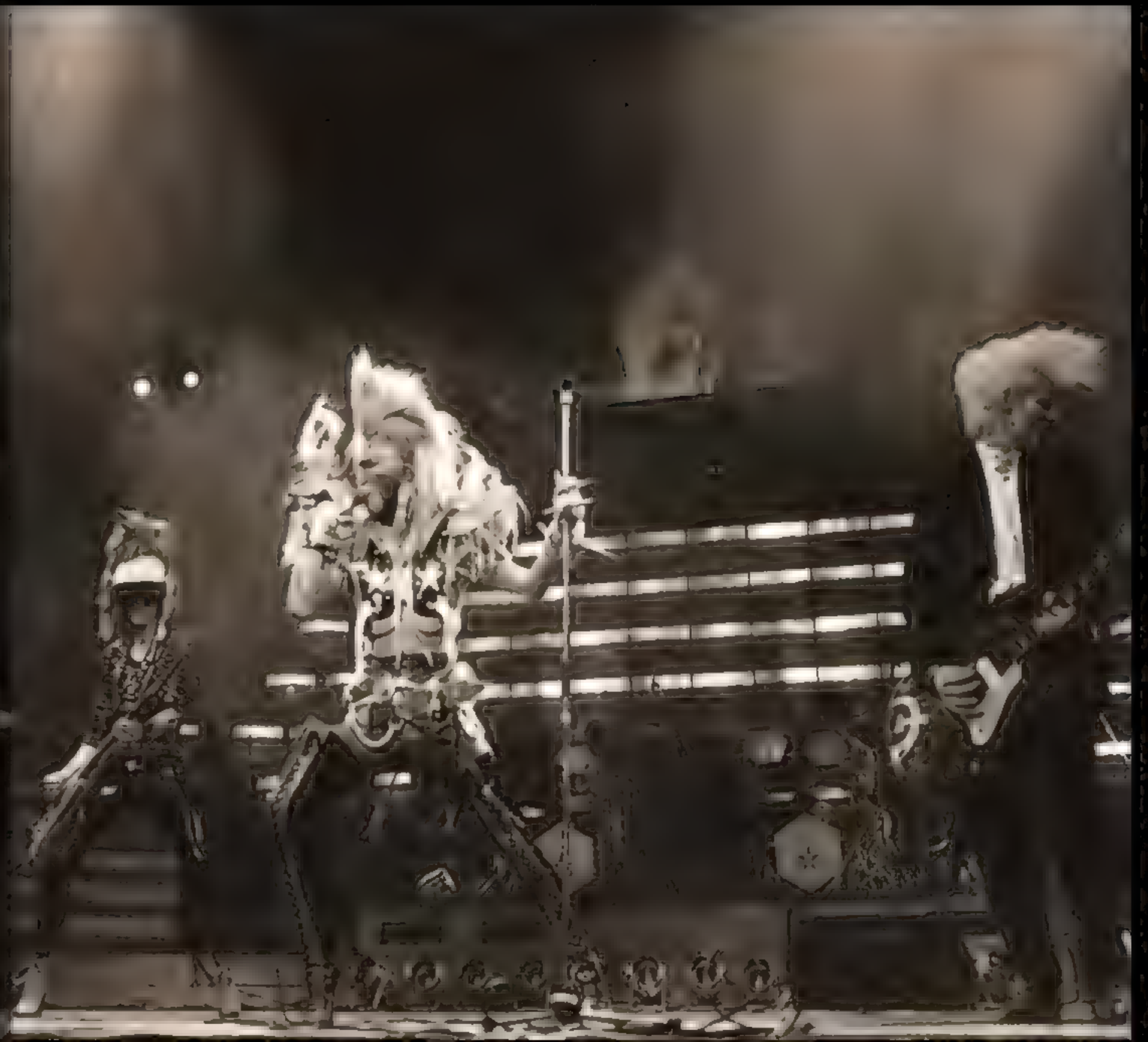
I came back to rehearse for **the Albert Hall gig.** It was a monster project and I was basing it on the film **Rollerball.** At the rehearsal rooms I could not believe how many people we were employing. There was an entire [illegible] white lab coats, an articulated [illegible] for the CRT monitors to make a video wall, satellite dishes feeding live TV from **Russia,** video monitors as well as audio monitors so the band could see... and I was going to film the whole thing on a 7 camera shoot. It was a massive operation.

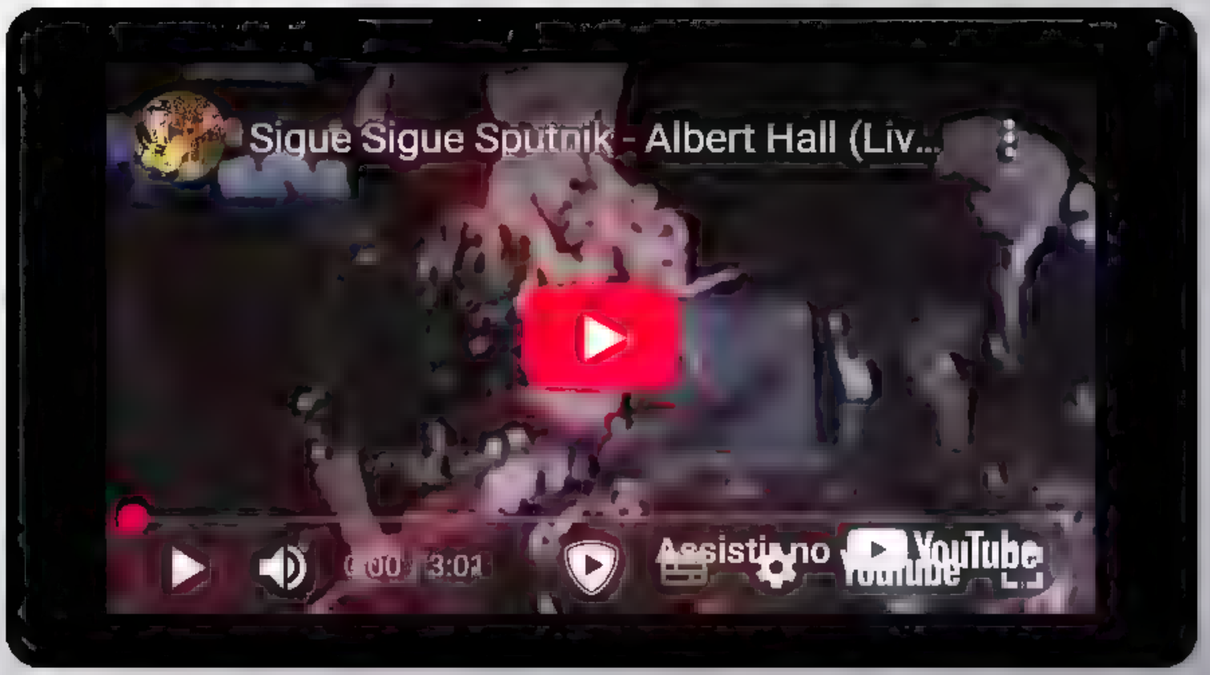
The gig at the Albert Hall went off perfectly to a packed crowd. It truly was an amazing spectacle the likes of which had never been seen before.

Then we were taking this whole operation straight to New York and L.A after the London show. Flying all those people out too. Don't ask..... it used up a huge chunk of money, but it was worth it because it was so new, it was revolutionary and it was great. I felt we were back on form, setting a new agenda.

The album 'Flaunt It' finally came out and went **straight in at number 10** in the charts. That was good too. It was selling everywhere. It went **platinum in Brazil.**

[Continued...]





Unfortunately **Flaunt It** got crucifying reviews in England. I can't say it didn't hurt. In the moment you have no choice but to try to rise above it and not care but we couldn't understand why it was getting slated. It was a great record and nothing else around at that time came close to it's sound. We would go on to sell almost a million copies worldwide and I still believe it stands.

Years later, backstage after a **B.A.D** gig, I met **Bono** again for the first time in years. The first time we had met he had been so young and had just started a band. I had been at a **Lou Reed** gig at Hammersmith Odeon. I was standing there with **Billy Idol** when this bunch of four young kids came up to us and said how much they loved **Dancing with Myself.** They were sweet Irish boys and they told us they had this little group called **U2.** I guess it was that echoey guitar part that made the impression!

We'd met again when **BAD** toured France supporting the now massive U2 and I was there returning Mick's sound mixing favour for Sputnik by doing the same for BAD. And that night backstage at the BAD party, Bono said to me how great he thought Sputnik were and how they had loved all the television imagery and satellite stuff at our Albert Hall gig, how visionary it had been and how we had done it all before them and the **Zooropa** tour. He was really generous with his enthusiasm and it was cool to hear Bono and his publicist **B.P.Fallon** championing Sputnik.

Meanwhile what did the reviews of the Albert Hall revolutionary super gig say at the time? Despite the huge production, the packed audience and the success on the night, they British press hardly mentioned it. They had laid off, just like I'd asked them to but not quite in the way I had intended, this time **they were killing me with silence.**

[Chapter 13...]

CHAPTER 13: To Live and (not) Die in LA

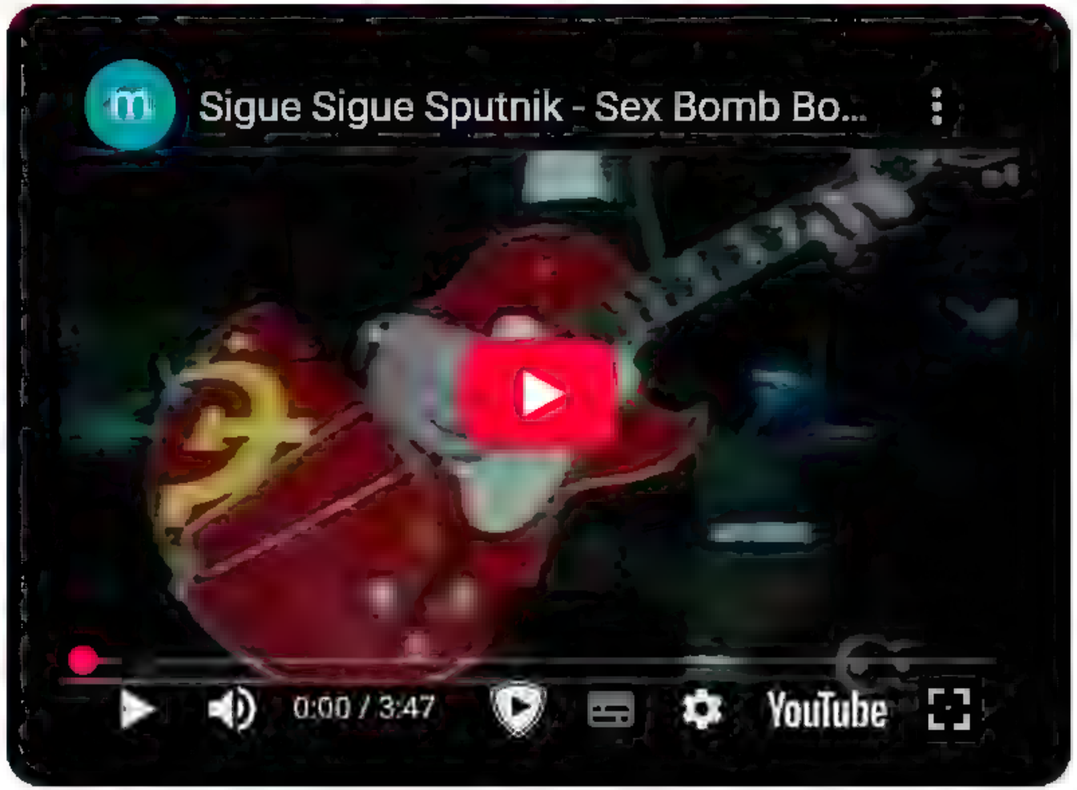
The filmed footage from the Albert Hall looked amazing and there was definitely a live film there for the future. I decided to use a section of it in the video for the next single. I'd always bridled against a typical pop promo of the band playing along in a studio but this footage was something really extraordinary with the video walls.

There was a lot of pressure to put out **Atari Baby** as the next single but I refused as I had this fixed idea of **Sex Bomb Boogie** as the third in the trilogy. It never lived up to the promise of the live feel and perversely it was released only as a 'video only' single - my idea of course and as usual too clever for my own good - thus making it ineligible for a chart position.

The real coup of the video came from my all time favourite Arnie movie **The Terminator.** How did I get release to use all that incredible **Terminator Robot** footage in the video? **JSP** knew someone at **Hemdale,** the UK distributor and for a tiny amount of money a huge 35mm print arrived at the edit suite for us to use, anything we liked, as long as it was not actually the real **Arnie.** The robot and cars exploding would suit me fine, we could never have shot anything like that ourselves, not even come close.

And I had come full circle. I'd used clips from a pirate VHS in the original demo video I'd made all that time ago, and of course Love Missile has a sample of the voice from the trailer on the record. It was so inspiring and to legitimately have parts of my favourite film actually in a SSS video. Apparently **James Cameron** went mad when he found out. Millions of dollars of footage and it's in a Pop promo!! (And I'd felt sure he'd be a fan!...)

[Continue...]



In retrospect, it was a completely mad idea to only release it on VHS... but I was fearless and again, no one was reigning me in. I'm not blaming anyone, merely stating a fact. And then there were the three singles, all on the same 192 beat. Perversely marvellous but quite insane when I look back. Maybe I could get to meet Arnie when I'm next in L.A. I mused as we watched the footage.

Because that was where I was next headed.

On a **plane to L.A** again, this time with the twenty or so other people who were now part of the crew and entourage, off to live it large in Hollywood. We even took **Japanese Ultravixen Ace,** who we'd decided was not really a roadie, hampered as she was by the 6 inch fingernails, she was now on wardrobe duties and would occasionally run on stage and adjust Degville's hair. Everyone was part of it and we made sure everyone who had been there from the beginning was in on the payoff, the whole **Ultra Crew.** And boy did we live large.

Also we now had some management help in the form of **David Krebbs.** David had managed Aerosmith and had been introduced to me by the new head of **EMI Rupert Perry,** I had an immediate affinity with him and I believe it was his faith that kept us alive as things started to get really tough in later years.

[**Continue...**]

I'd had the sense to admit that I was out of my depth in the U.S.A. and needed a proper manager there. The new giant crew in the USA ran up a $15,000 **limo bill** before any one noticed, taking limos to Disneyland and to go shopping. We were big time now with big management. Everyone was even more pumped if that was possible! We rehearsed in L.A with the American version of the satellite crew and **partied like there was no tomorrow.** We were spending a fortune too....

While I was in L.A, trying not to let the pink hair dye run when swimming in the pool in the sun, I had a call from Krebbs's people. I was to go to a Hollywood studio to meet with **John Hughs** the director who had made 'Pretty **in Pink',** a movie that had been instrumental in **Simple Minds** taking off in the States.

I felt as if I was in a movie too that day, driving through the gates to be met by **John Hughs** himself who took me to a preview theatre on the Lot. He played me the section filmed for 'Ferris **Bueller's Day Off'** where he's in the shower and it had part of the Love Missile 12' mix playing in the scene. It was perfect and Hughs urged me to convince EMI to let him have the track for the film or, he said passionately as we sat there in the screening room, the scene just won't work. He'd set his mind on that song and wanted it whatever it took.

For some reason, EMI, or their label in the States, **Manhatten** records were reluctant to release the song. They seemed to think they were going to have a huge hit with it already and did not want to compromise that by giving it away in a film. I had no idea of the significance of this. Everyone thought I had all the answers to everything, but in America in particular, I had no idea how to play the game. Everything was alien to me from the way business was done to the way radio was organised. Eventually Manhatten gave in but refused to let the song be on the soundtrack album. It seemed crazy, but with everyone so confident why argue. You can imagine the amount of royalties we lost out on when the film became a huge hit and went on to become a cult classic.

The whole giant video wall show in America looked fantastic. Unfortunately the massive press in Europe, combined with the ever-growing Frankenstein myth about the band, meant a lot of the USA press was already skeptical and forewarned before they even saw the gig. They weren't going to be taken in by this English scam merchant. That 'Fleece the World' t-shirt was coming back to haunt me big time.

New York's Palladium show was a spectacular evening even if a very young **'Beastie Boys'** were throwing eggs at us from the balcony. Neal X tried (hopelessly, she swatted him like a fly) to get off with **Grace Jones** and the gig was completely packed. The video wall performed brilliantly and the band partied in every club in New York.

After America we flew to Toronto to do even more TV interviews. I could tell I was loosing it slightly by then when I called Canada "North America", on a Live TV show. Ouch.

Everything seemed primed in the USA. We had management help and the record companies backing. I'd been on MTV, the track was premiering in **Ferris Beuller** and we were about to go on an interview and promo trip around another 10 U.S cities.

It was all going to be great. But at that moment, with the applause from the last gig still in my ears, the months of intense pressure and burning the candle at both ends, were catching up with me fast. I couldn't face going to another party, and returned to the hotel alone in my huge white Limo... grateful that for once I could just fall asleep.

[Chapter 14...]

CHAPTER 14: Second Album Syndrome

As the year drew to a close we were still strong and I had high hopes for things to happen in America. EMI had picked up the option for a second year, and we got the advance ready to fund the next episode. Taking stock, things looked good. We had hit singles, sold a lot of albums around the world and everyone definitely knew who we were.

Back in London I watched a screening of **Ferris Bueller** and was pleased to discover that Mick's increasingly successful **B.A.D** were also in the movie soundtrack. Sputnik and BAD had literally grown up together. Everyone in the early years, all playing football together every Wednesday evening, in a field by the council tower blocks just off the Westway at **Latimer Road.** Degville had been surprisingly handy in the number 11 shirt, belying his weedy frame.

I sat there that Christmas wondering just what to do next. **Malcolm McClaren's Great Rock and Roll Swindle** had crashed and burned after the first album, so the path was unknown from now on. I was on my own on this one with no precedent set for what happens next. On a positive note, unlike The Pistols, no one had murdered anyone else or died, although I suspect there had been some pretty close shaves, given the madness of the meteoric rocket ride we'd all just been on. Needless to say, all the characters were fully formed monsters by now, Ray Mayhew still had a string of court appearances to come which now included assault on his girlfriend, Martin was becoming increasingly rude to everyone except Magenta, and Neal now saw himself as the Jack the Lad of rock and roll, fearlessly hitting on every glamourous woman he came across. But we had an office full of very tall girls, a huge entourage and EMI's money in the bank. What could go wrong?

[Continue...]

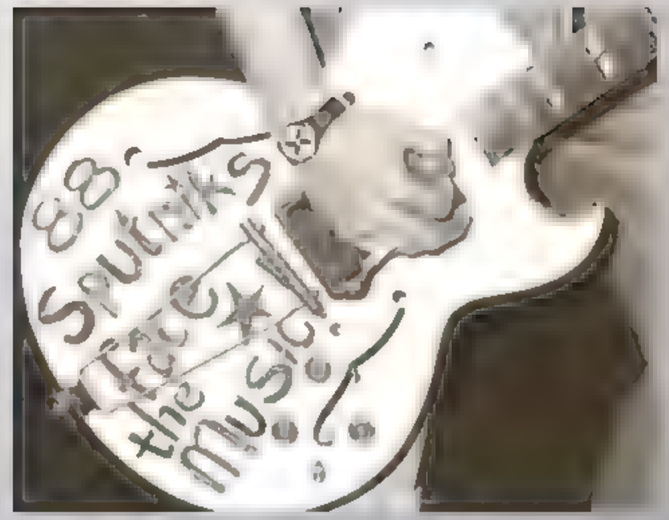
Except that small nagging voice. Bloody hell, Tony, what's the plan?

And what was it? I honestly had no idea, I'd put all the ideas into the first chapter and how could I possibly come up with a story to top the last one? All the innovations, the slogans, the ideas, the visuals were all last years chip wrappings by now. I stared at the first page of the next script and it was blank.

It occurred to me it might be a good idea to write some new songs. Since the band had launched, I had become a marketing man, being a musician had taken a back seat to being the mouthy know it all. It was time to go back to my real day job which was writing songs.

What was the new slogan to be? I look back and wonder what the hell was I thinking to say "This time it's about the music?" What I meant was that we were going back to our roots, keeping it real and avoiding the hype surrounding the music that, as I had seen, could threaten to engulf it and take away it's credibility. What it sounded like was that the first time around it hadn't been about the music at all, that we were admitting the very thing everyone had been accusing us of, that we weren't credible musicians and it wasn't credible music. It was another 'Fleece the World' moment but for now I thought it was a good concept and I was going with it and would write the songs accordingly.

I was still living at Magenta's in Pindock Mews, although increasingly I had been sleeping at JSPs, that in itself an ever changing stream of rented places as she waited for the completion of her dream home, currently being designed and built in Clarkenwell.



The good thing was, nothing changed at Magenta's ever, nothing moving for years and years, so the trusty Pro 1, connected to the 808 drum machine, was still there waiting, exactly where we had left it, having given such sterling service to the first 10 identical Sputnik tracks.

We approached it with new vision and daring. We changed the speed a tiny bit. Don't worry, of course it still went DDDDaDDDaDDD.

EMI wanted a new hit single. Immediately if that was possible. January's a good time to release new product and some wag at the label had had the idea of recording a version of **Bowies 'Rebel Rebel'.** Maybe they'd heard us jamming it at a soundcheck. I was really half hearted about it, but sensing a possible free trip to Memphis, home of our Elvis 1990 inspiration, the plan was hatched get the producer of **ZZ TOP** to work with us. I loved their video trilogy and saw a connection with their sequenced bass sound.

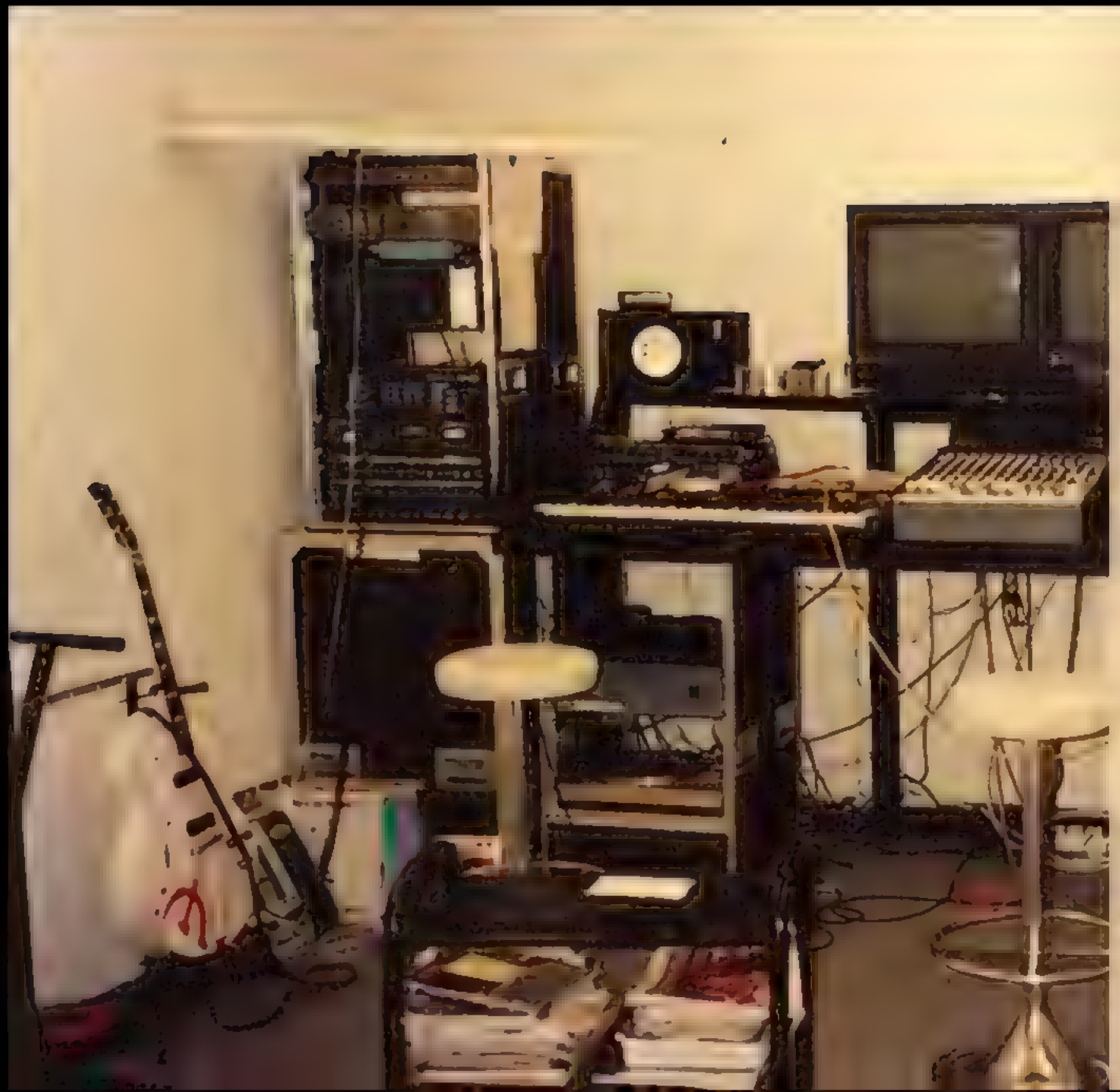
EMI bought the plan immediately and before you could go Naa Naa Na Naa Naa the producer was sitting in Magenta's living room eying the pro 1. Oh I wanted this to happen. The ZZ producer showed us his ideas, we looked at our feet, knew this was never gonna work and Elvis left the building.

We tried again to humour EMI with **Steve Levine** - the producer of **Culture Club** - but Degville managed to come up with the worst vocal I had ever heard and the Sputnik version of Rebel Rebel was consigned to the musical junk yard.

We decided it had to be original material, we didn't want to do covers and assuming, after the last debacle with all the mixes, that **Moroder** wouldn't necessarily jump at the chance to work with us again, we set the speed of the 808 to the same one as for **'I Feel Love'** and Hey Presto! A beat we liked. Success. But hang on a minute, God's telling us something here, we could hear it in our head but couldn't understand what he was saying. Then X played **'Get it On'** over the top of the beat and Degville sang the first four lines of the new song.

To celebrate our genius epiphany moment we went to the pub to celebrate, without saving... when we came back the sequencer had crashed and we were convinced that we never quite found the dream beat again! The saga of writing 'Success', after that initial dream beginning, was to take up the rest of the year. We couldn't come up with the chorus for months.

[Continue ...]



Dave Ambrose, the A&R man we trusted, who had signed the Pistols, had now left EMI and we felt pretty rudderless. In fact, everyone who worked with us during that first heady year was now gone and in their place came a new, younger team who held the cheque book but not necessarily the same vision. Its always the same with record companies, people get fired or leave all the time and the new broom comes in and you get inherited by them but they also bring with them their own bands and their own visions of what is great. Still over time I was to become close friends with the new head of A&R **Nick Gatfield.**

Unlike the others in the band who had blown their advances on living large and first class travel, I took my advance and a bank loan to put down a deposit on a mews house, literally just around the corner from 392b Harrow Road. It wasn't a great house, having been used for years as a car repair shop, it still looked like a squat inside and would remain so until I got more money some years later, but because the area was pretty scary, no one had a problem with the noise which was a huge plus. With EMI's money we built our own small studio in the downstairs garage area and the **SSS Experiment Camp** was born. Our own place. We had new clever equipment and there was a pub just five doors away. Creativity and inspiration was just around the corner.

[Continue...]

The Madness surrounding the recording of the band's second album. How could we possibly follow the initial impact and excitement felt when the band first burst onto the scene in 1986? As partying overtook the work, did we leave our ideals at the nightclub door?

[Continue...]

There was no real overall plan and we worked with a succession of producers and engineers. There was **Gary Langham** who worked with **Trevor Horn.** Why didn't I get Clever Trevor to produce us? He is without doubt a genius but I think he was having the same trouble with our chart rivals **Frankie Goes to Hollywood** after the massive success of **Relax** and **Two Tribes.** Did I mention that Magenta had been Frankie's PR in the early days too? Them and **Prince.** That girl sure could spot the talent. Langham came in with a mountain of equipment, all plugged into a single socket in the wall. We felt like **ELP.** There was **Liminha** flown in from Brazil where he was a top producer (or so someone in the Brazilian office of EMI told me).

Ever on to a new idea, we had written a version of **La Bamba** called **Rio Rocks,** but again Degville struggled with the vocal, wasting hours of expensive studio time, getting hopeless, completely soulless take after take. Getting the vocal out of Martin had always been like pulling teeth and the idea of what it took to be a singer had always seemed totally alien to him. But what did I expect? He was a clothes designer when I gave him the part and he'd been really good at that. Years later he started to sing really well too, even with feeling and soul, maybe he just had to do it his way.

Somehow most of 1987 went by in a blur of half songs, holidays and drinking, still struggling to find a chorus for the elusive 'Success' until we finally had enough songs for an album.

Then the **Pete Waterman Saga** started. **Stock Aitkin and Waterman** were that year's most successful producers, having hits with everyone they worked with. Surely they could be the only producers worthy of a song called **Success?** It was one of my more perverse ideas, going against the obvious as always. Doing exactly what we should not do. Outrage working with pure pop. There was no one I trusted like Ambrose at the label to run it by so I called my old friend and the bands original benefactor **Fatchner.** It's brilliant he said. Do it. So we did.

Pete Waterman came over the river from Southwark and was sitting in my garage studio. I played him a cassette of the demo we had finally recorded. Solving the missing chorus conundrum by just using the bridge as the chorus. Pete listened once, said yes, its definitely a hit and off he went with the cassette in his pocket.

A week later he called me at home. "Come to Southwark and have a listen" he said, "its done. We just need Martin to sing along with the guide vocal and you're gonna love it".

What?

Done, finished, recorded and we had not even been to the studio? That's the way they worked I realised. Who did the guitars I coughed, grasping for something to say. "Kids don't like guitars Tony" said Pete with confidence, dumbfounding me even more.

This was going to be harder than I thought. The track did sound like a hit, that much was certain, but a hit for **Kylie** not **Sigue Sigue Sputnik.** I was to spend the coming weeks (or was it months?) over at their studio, at war with Stock, Aitken and Waterman battling to get guitars on the track, battling to to get heavy synths on the track. I resorted to subterfuge, when Pete had gone home for the weekend to play with the real life steam engines he collected (thats right, real ones, giant ones, not Hornby models I used to own as a kid) and sneaked into the studio to record with the assistant engineer.

I don't know who eventually pummeled who in to the ground. I suspect it was a bit of both, but X played his guitars, Degville sung for his life and I came away with a **Kylie record** with a bit of Sputnik on it and the distinct impression that Pete was really glad to see the back of me. It did sound like a hit though and I needed a hit to keep the label's confidence in us.

[Chapter 15...]

1987 blurred into 1988, and it had been two years since the massive success of Love Missile...

CHAPTER 15: When in Doubt, go to Paris

Just to go a bit more left field, we also got in **Stephen Hague** who had produced, amongst others, **New Order** and **Peter Gabriel** to work on another bit of madness, a version of the **Albinoni Classic Adagio.** I renamed it **'Tarzan Vs IBM'** only to find both brand names were copyrighted and I couldn't use them. It eventually became **Albinoni Vs Star Wars.** Stephen came into our studio with the first Mac computer I had ever seen and seemed to spend forever programming it. I lost interest very rapidly, but the track opens the album and X programmed some great drum loops and guitars on part two.

For a bit of R&R we took the obvious course, got the full team together and we all went to Paris for three nights at a club on Pigalle called Le Locomotive. Great gigs.

We were increasing the dangerous game by being off the front pages and out of the charts for so long but there seemed no way to speed things up with the new releases. New groups came and went through the music papers whilst the mighty Starship Sputnik waited, stranded on the runway, waiting for takeoff again. We were still churning through the record advances though at an alarming speed, with an ever changing, seemingly ever expanding office of employees on the PAYE payroll.

I knew I could not rely on a series of press releases to help us this time around. It had to be just about the music as I had stated. Although me being me, I would do my damnedest to package it up in order to raise some eyebrows and excitement.

[Continue...]

The Locomotive Club, Paris

Much as the new people were good at what they did in the office, as with the old team at EMI, I yearned for the safety of the old faces. By now, JSP had poached Magenta to be on her **Network 7** television program and she eventually also became the face of the **Rough Guides** travel shows. Mag was always such a STAR, it didn't surprise me at all that she would go on to be a huge TV personality and I had wished her nothing but love and success when she left, but now I realised for the first time just how crucial she had been to everything, how much I had trusted her and how much I missed her measured input. I have never really given Magenta all the credit she deserves for what she did both for me and the band and I want to set that straight.

I don't really know what **Kavanagh, Mayhew** and **Yana** were doing all through this period. They took no part in the creative process or recording. I don't even know if they wanted to, but they were getting paid the same as everyone else and like everyone else, they were enjoying living the life that success had brought them.

My life was different too now and to use a cliche, I wasn't hanging out on the street any more, I was becoming out of touch. Sure, I was getting great input of course from some of the really smart people I was now socialising with because of Janet, people like **Charles Saatchi, Micheal Grade** and in the music world we had become close friends with **Tom Watkins** the manager of **Pet Shop Boys.** All great, but it wasn't **Bryan Gregory** and **the Cramps** anymore if you get my meaning.

[Continued...]

We mixed the album in Milton Keynes that summer of 88, experimenting with our own 12" mixes now and I was really happy with the album and its triumvirate of 3 singles **Success**, **Dancerama** and the minimalist **Albinoni**. Only the new version of **Jayne Mansfield**, written back in 1984 on the old portastudio held the glorious Sputnik classic 192 beat. The 12" version mixed late one night with **Gary Langham's** sound was the ultimate Sputnik Rock and Dub masterpiece.

The album titled **'Dress for Excess'** elaborately packaged with Cyberpunk slogans from **Bruce Stirling** and **William Gibson** was finally ready to go. We played a series of low key dates in village halls and tiny pubs to try to find our way back to the adrenaline pumped enthusiasm and excitement of the early days.

I decided to play up on the sell out derisive aspect that the the Stock Aitkin and Waterman collaboration would almost certainly provoke, by turning it into the campaign itself with the 'Is it **Sputnik** or Is it **Waterman**' slogan everywhere on giant yellow posters and t shirts. Multiple single sleeves came out as Sputnik/Aitkin Waterman with pictures of Pete with pink hair. We even did an Acid house remix and a heavy metal version just to cover all bases.

The record sounded like a hit and the timing, coming up to the Christmas rush where all the big straight acts put out their singles was critical. It was nearly two years since the last album came out and everything had to be right.

But I was to make one crucial mistake, which would unravel down all the carefully crafted image of Sigue Sigue Sputnik that it had taken so many years to put together.

CHAPTER 16: Dystopian Future - NOT!

I just needed a promo video to go with the song Success.

Remember how great and ahead of its time the Love Missile promo was? That **Neon lit Blade Runner Dystopian future** it conjured up? It was amazing, the computer graphics, the voice overs, the dub effects. I simply couldn't better it.

The first idea I came up with this time was good and ironic and funny. I announced I would film **100 famous** people all simply saying the word "Success". They would be cut together on top of the song, the famous voices obscuring the music underneath to make an anarchic mash up, like a TV news documentary. Very Sputnik. I was pleased with myself as it would mock the track as well as selling it which was Very Me.

The Vixens and me were immediately equipped with portable video cameras and we went to parties. Everyone was up for it. I filmed **Kylie** and **Rick Astley** straight away back at **PWL studios** for an ironic twist. **Simon Le Bon, Lemmy, Donny Osmond, S Express,** Actors Thesps, TV people and chancer celebrities were all there. I got my hundred faces. Genius. The only trouble was, because we shot everything at night in clubs and parties it all looked badly lit and a bit amateurish and dark. Those cameras were hopeless in low light in those days.

Maybe another element was needed I concluded.

[Continue...]

Tony James and Duffy, Marbella '88

And then the person I had become, totally detached and out of touch with the original ideals, the person having too good a time, me and X and Degville, hanging out in the sunshine, being IT and dreaming about pulling Princess Stephanie....Well we all fancied a bit of a holiday in the sun as Lydon had once sneered, especially one on EMI's expense. So here we go!

We'll film a swinging sixties party video in **MARBELLA** just like in the lyric. We'll even get **Duffy,** the famous sixties photographer to direct. It will be such fun - we can spend a whole week poncing about getting pissed.

There, in that single, fun-seeming idea, I destroyed the whole image of Sputnik. From Elvis 2020 to Freddy and the Dreamers, from Clockwork Orange to the Birdy Song, From Blade Runner to Bognor Regis in one painful four minute clip that I would never live down.

And the video was terrible. All the 100 famous people demoted to tiny unrecognisable cameos overlaid silently over the blaring jaunty track. No famous people saying Success, just a succession of half-recognisable faces.

I have to accept full responsibility. It was my idea, on my watch. Where was my celestial Svengali protecting me from myself? No tap on the shoulder with a "**what the fuck are you doing Tony?**" Of course the band loved it, a week in the sun and they definitely got very drunk. I somehow accurately predicted and portrayed my very own **Kubrician Peter Sellars**-like character in **Dr Strangelove** as the Meglomaniac pushed around in a wheelchair by a nurse. How accurate that was to become.

[Continue...]

All this overlaying of too many ideas caused the single to slip back a couple of weeks into the crucial Christmas rush. It started strong, getting lots of play on radio and entered in the top thirty at 22 just in time for our London show at the Astoria. **Tom Watkins** introduced us on stage with the immortal words **"I'm a fat cunt and this is Sigue Sigue Sputnik".**

But we'd lost our balls. Remember back in 85 where I was happy if our record was banned. *"It should be banned. I don't want my record played by a load of straight old fart Radio 1 DJs, along with all the other shit in the charts"* I had crowed back in the heady first days. Well now those old farts got their revenge.

Now I wanted ...needed... a hit, because after all the mouthing off, all the grandious schemes and big plans for the future, there was a giant queue of people behind me, waiting in line to dance on our grave if we weren't a 'Success'. Ironic title really isn't it? ...and I needed it to inspire that new set of execs at EMI, the ones who'd missed the glory days when it was all going so right and there was a real danger that we were about to become nothing more than yesterday's news.

But things weren't all bad... X was trying to get off with the model **Marie Helvin,** and the single held its position for another week and then slipped back under the Christmas radar....

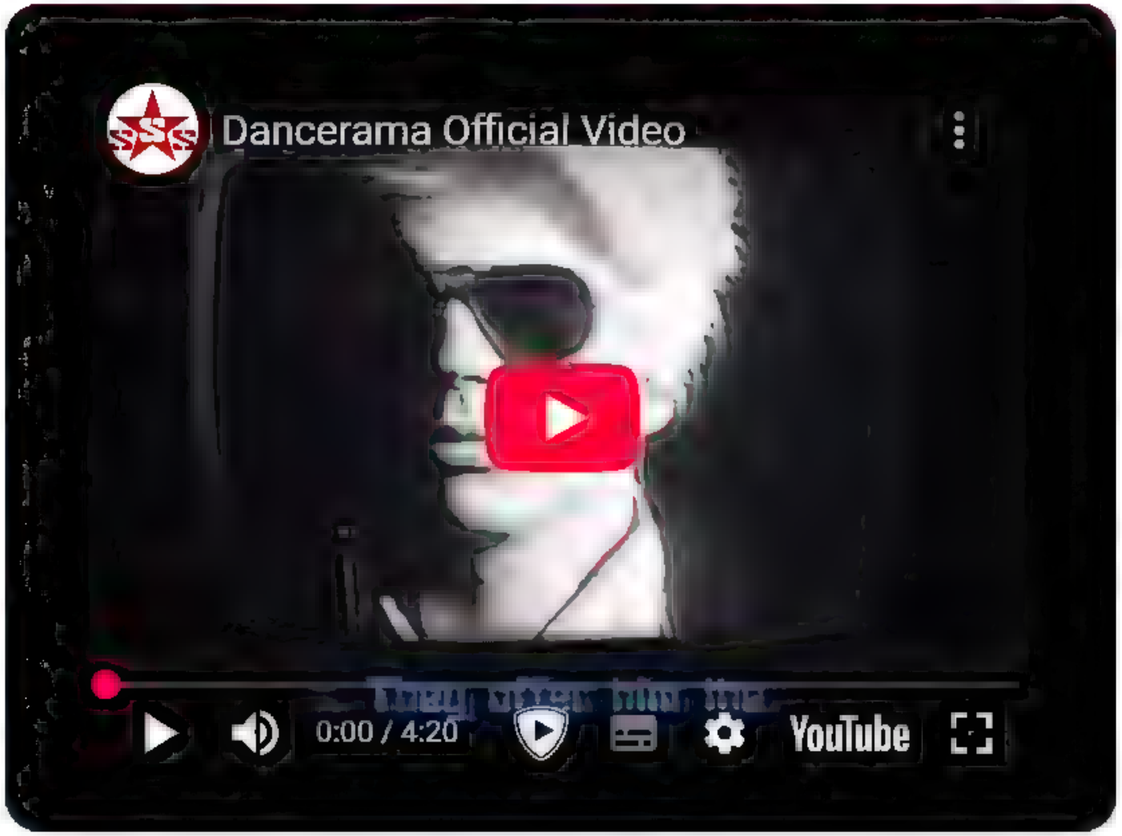
[Chapter 17...]

We seemed to be following a similar trajectory to the Pistols, right down to their tour of the USA and finishing with a jaunt to Brazil...

CHAPTER 17: We're off to Brazil Then...

We did more shows right up until Christmas and I kept up the bravado but inside I knew we were loosing it. 1989 seemed to slip by even though we still released more singles. Home life with JSP was also taking a turn for the worse.

Dancerama with its brilliant cartoon manga like cover and futuristic video, shot in Paris and based on the sci fi film **La Jette** did something to claw back some substance, but it was still filmed running around Paris in the sunshine, still a world away from my original vision.



All hopes of some kind of success in America had faded away too. I still don't understand why we did not go back to the States and play more tours which was the only way to break through there. All that expectation and I never ever passed through the doors of **Manhattan** records again. Later I heard EMI had closed them down. To this day I have no idea what happened, what happened with the management and the planned shows. I bet it was all on our tab somewhere.

However we were still feeling up because for some obscure reason we'd sold lots and lots of records, platinum even, in - ironically - Sunny Brazil and a tour was planned. I was loosing any control of the organisation by this stage. I think I just couldn't handle it any more, wanted to be like the others, just a guy in the band having a great time with someone else taking care of business. Except there was no one else to do that, so I decided to bring in an "experienced" tour manager for Brazil.

[Continue...]

I'd also been temporarily sidelined by my own vanity project, managed by my friend **Tom Watkins,** with a one off single called the **Bizet Boys,** using a sample of Can Can over a sub Pet Shop Boys track. It even sounded like them and we played on that too. Tom swindled money out of EMI like only a proper manager can and we all had fun as usual, with me for once just being the singer, wearing a full face crash helmet to obscure my identity.

We'd released **'Dress for Excess'** ahead of the European release in a special, simpler cover so it would be out for the Brazilian tour. I was expecting that we would be millionaires in Brazil, not realising that it was really hard to get the money out of the country with the Brazil/Pound exchange rate being completely ridiculous. They had something like two hundred percent inflation over there.

I had not thought about it at the time, but in retrospect, we seemed to be following a similar trajectory to the Pistols, right down to their tour of the USA and finishing with a jaunt to Brazil....

We couldn't wait to get into our first class seats on the plane, all the giant red flight cases with their Japanese lettering in a huge pile on the terminal floor at Heathrow shipped out too. Fuck America then, lets go **Scarface** style to **South America.** Fuck it, lets embrace the sun and the culture. The culture was available at the ridiculously low price of less than 10 dollars a gram too. Just have a look at the video and you'll get the picture.

[ ]

https://sputnikworld.com/The_Sputnik_Story_17_3.html

I don't even remember how long we were there in the twitching haze, willing girls and a samba mix of **Rio Rocks.** Were any of the records hits after we left? I have no idea. I don't even remember what happened to the Rio Rocks single, buried somewhere. But it was sexy and dangerous and we felt great, playing a succession of sold-out gigs in massive arena's. I think Neal and I stayed another two weeks when the others went home. It's a little blurred.

It transpired that the "experienced" tour manager meanwhile had stolen all the money earned from the Brazilian tour to feed his own serious drug habit. I was never able to confront him because tragically he committed suicide soon after we got back to England.

Then, when I finally flew back to London and staggered into JSP's house with my tattered luggage, looking like I'd been to hell and back and desperately needing sleep. Janet threw the immortal words at me that you should never ask a young musician returning from that kind of ordeal.

"Did you sleep with any one?"

"Of course I fucking slept with someone, three at a time sometimes, all the time. What the fuck do you think a coke-fueled rockstar does on tour in Brazil?" was the perhaps slightly over candid reply I gave her. Maybe just slightly.

JSP sent all my belongings and clothes back to the house in Chippenham Mews in black bin bags. I would have a lot of explaining to do at some point in the future but for now, I just needed to sleep.

[Continue...]

When I look back at the footage of the Brazilian tour today what you can see -- accurately reflected, and for me at least, painful to observe -- is the band becoming... well, just normal.

Suddenly tired of being the space aliens and tired of those magical days back in 1984-5 when we were feeling so different, so special, going to clubs with pink hair and living out our whole life as if were some Blade Runner or Mad Max dream. In Rio it all seemed so very far away and I personally felt tired of wearing high heels and hair extensions and just wanted a holiday. Or was it that we'd just had enough and wanted to stop fighting the perception of who we were? Just wanted to hide from who we'd become; hated by the press, laughed at, no longer dangerous?

It's made me reflect on a lot more than that. Was I not really the real thing then? Had I just been living out a fantasy, and now I was bored with that moment and ready to move on to the next?

I've worked with some extraordinary musicians in my time and there is one thing I know for sure. The really great ones, the ones touched by God or whatever you want to call it, are born that way. It's not a choice or a fantasy, they just ARE. **Johnny Thunders** was that person, for real, 24 hours every day and died being Johnny Thunders. I found it hard to work with **Andrew Eldritch** and often cursed his refusal to play the game and make himself more successful. But now I realise that to him it's not a game, not an act. He has to be that difficult, introverted fucked-up artist who can't and won't compromise because its in his DNA. Even if it kills him in the end as it did with **Johnny** or **Kurt** or **Amy** - as we all know, the list is endless...

Am I different? I like the game, the role, the creating of the monster. And I know I can BE the monster myself, until I get bored and then I just move on to another game. Fanatical and uncompromising in the moment, obsessed with the detail and relentless. But no, in my heart, what I know is, I wouldn't die for it.

In Brazil I just wanted to be the player in the band enjoying the success. In a way I feel we let down the Brazilians. They expected the Space Aliens, the Replicants of Rock and Roll, the ultimate fantasy band. What they got was a rock band on holiday, not acting the part and not dressing for it either.

It also showed again that I wasn't really the Machiavellian manager, controlling all the moves, the TJ Bosss character I had sold to the group right from the start, the one with an answer for everything. Now I just wanted to be me again.

We certainly lived the excessive life in Brazil that's for sure, but they didn't get Sputnik, they got a rock band on holiday. Ironically we were playing brilliantly by then and the music sounded really great, but for a band whose image was as important -- if not more important -- than the music, well as I said, I can't help feeling we let them down.... Watch the Rio Sucks video. I couldn't edit it and it speaks volumes.

What you see is as far removed from those original first photos of the band in the subway at midnight as you could possibly get. We had looked like no other band on the planet. Now when I look at the Brazilian footage, I see exactly what we had become - five blokes by the swimming pool in our swimming shorts having a laugh.

Hindsight's a wonderful thing isn't it?

[Chapter 18...]

CHAPTER 18: I Did It My Way

The final record released was our version of **Adagio.**

When I look back at it now, it appears as some unseen hand was guiding me, leading me to the final conclusion. The video is a single fixed shot of a sinking sunset, over which rolls a huge list of imaginary credits, listing everyone in the band and everyone I knew, slowly rolling past to the melancholy track.

It was just like the end of a movie. It was the end of that movie for us.

We limped through a few token shows across Spain and played our final show in Lisbon Portugal. Even that show almost had to be cancelled, as we drove there on that final day thinking we'd arrive too late. Only the fact that Portugal is on English not European time gave us an extra hour and we just made it on to the stage.

[Continue...]

As the massive success and euphoria of being the hottest and most controversial group in the world is replaced by the workmanlike realities of touring and promoting the difficult second album, the band embark on a classic holiday in the sun as they tour Spain and Portugal. The feeling of dancing while our Pompei is imploding is palpable as EMI's lifeblood money starts to run out.

[Continue..]

The last entry in the Sputnik office diary:
On the first of September 1989, the money ran out and I had to pull the plug on the Sputnik Movie and all its players.
But boy what a ride it had been. Believe me, the thrill of a lifetime and I don't regret one single moment.
[Chapter 19...]

Chapter 19: Out of the Blue

As I sat amongst the debris of the crashed Starship Sputnik, I had plenty of time to contemplate where and how it had all gone wrong and how the dream had crashed so badly and so quickly when it had all been flying so high and so fast... and as I sit here writing this history nearly thirty years later, watching the videos on YouTube, rereading the press and going through all the old diaries from that time -- With hindsight -- I've been given an insight that would have been impossible at the time.

When I dreamed that dream and sat all those days in the cafe in Shepherds Market, scribbling in the little red book, like some mad scientist, I could concentrate only on the formula and as we have seen, the formula was good, Once I had created that baby Sputnik, had all the components in place and flicked the switch to bring it alive, it never occurred to me to observe how it was growing, how all those very different personalities, plucked from obscurity and suddenly placed on a very big stage, were evolving. I never once stopped to listen or to ask what they were feeling or what they thought of me. My eye was always on the next move, the next big idea and how to get it there. Like a very bad single parent, I was never home and I can't help thinking that if there had been someone there, for me and for the rest of the group, someone who could communicate between them and me a whole lot better than I could, than maybe some of worse habits that developed later, the bad attitudes, the unreliability and the complete lack of discipline that is so crucial if a band is to survive could have been avoided.

But hey, as we know hindsight is a wonderful thing. I am what I am.

Continue...

Meanwhile who was there reigning me in? I understand so much more now about those crazy years, high on ideas and with the power to make them all happen. My belief and genuine enthusiasm allowed me to convince everyone around me, from to the band to the record company, that every mad idea was achievable. That we'd all have the best fun carrying them out too. I was a charismatic Guy Fawkes determined to burn down the houses of the media, laughing maniacally as I lit the fuse and because when I stood back the results brought success, I was unstoppable.

I just needed a tap on the shoulder when things were getting out of hand. Someone to tell me in a measured voice that if you say "Fleece the World", if you go out there and sound like you are goading or sneering, then sooner or later, in this industry, that stuff will come back to kill you. This is a great game and you are playing it well, but you have to be measured and watch your back, making sure not to alienate the very people you want to play with.

Power corrupts, that's for sure and I am the first one to put up my hand and admit that I got carried away, but who loved me enough or was close enough to me to tell me the painful truth, that I was loosing the plot, sounding increasingly like a sneery know it all, with little grasp of reality. I had convinced everyone that I had the infallible plan, that I knew all the answers, who can blame many of the people around for being pissed off at me when it all went wrong, when I couldn't continue to make all their dreams come true and they saw me as suddenly human and vulnerable and just as insecure as they were.

And as we know, when you are vulnerable like that, all those people you were goading and sneering at, all the ones watching and judging, even if they were happy to come along for the ride, they will be the ones waiting for a chance to kick you the hardest when it all comes crashing down.

The phone, that had never stopped ringing was suddenly deathly quiet, as was the office on 392b Harrow Road, devoid now of all trace of Ultra Vixens.

When it did ring, out of the blue, it was a call that was to change my life again. It was my old friend Andrew Eldritch.

Come and join the **Sisters of Mercy** he said offering an ironic twist to the story that had begun back in 1982 that night at the **Embassy club** when I'd asked him to be the singer in Sputnik.

Another adventure was about to start..... But that's another story.

[Chapter 20...]

In 1994 I bought my first Apple Mac computer... and discovered a whole new world.

Chapter 20: Into The Unknown

When I left school, in the time-honoured tradition of many English musicians, I then went on to University as a means to get a grant (yes, believe it or not, the Government paid YOU in those days, giving you money each term) which I would use not to buy books, but to buy myself a **Rickenbacker bass** and a decent amplifier. To keep me busy in the times between learning to play the bass and my early gigs, I studied Mathematics and Computer Science at Brunel University. Fortunately I was very good at it, and left with a First Class Honours degree.

This study of early computers came in really handy when I unpacked my first **Apple** computer all those years ago. I couldn't wait to connect to this new growing phenomena called the internet, fire up the search engines and guess what I searched for? Can you imagine what that felt like? All that time, my baby Frankenstein, my Sputnik, had been dead, demonised, buried without trace - or so I thought.

Because suddenly, there it was, living in the hearts of computers and fans all over the world. There were literally hundreds of Sputnik fan sites. I could read things about myself that even I'd forgotten. It may sound sentimental but I was honestly overwhelmed. Sputnik was alive in Cyberspace - Sputnik lived, was talked about, listened to, traded, debated. The signals from the record industry could not have been clearer: You Are Dead and we will never help you or believe in you again. EMI had even deleted the records by now, as if to wipe out my past completely, as if they were embarrassed for ever believing in the first place. Yet, despite the best efforts of the music industry, here it was.

[Continue...]

And that continues to this day. Take a look on Youtube and read the thousands of comments attached to the original Love Missile video, with its millions of views, as new fans discover the band every day.

Will History prove us Right? I'd like to think so. When I look back at those early videos and photographs of the band, I still get a shiver down the spine. It was a magical time when belief and the confidence that comes from that belief when you just KNOW that what you have created is extraordinary, means that for one perfect moment, you can hold the whole world in your hands - or at least believe you can and after all - isn't believing half of the game.....

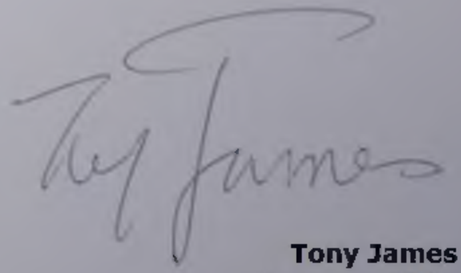
It's still the same today, you just need to add a laptop. Or is that an iPhone or an iPad? What you most certainly never do is start out on any creative venture for the money because it just doesn't work that way. I didn't set out to form the biggest group in the world. I didn't set out to be rich and famous. I set out to form the group of my dreams. I was basing the anarchic concept on the groups that I loved at the time The Cramps, Suicide and the Sex Pistols. These were cult groups, not the massive sellers. I realise now, looking back, that groups that set out to be anarchic burn out really quickly.

Back then we would have been happy to perhaps sell enough CDs to get into the top fifty.

The music business game that I once thought I knew - even if I realise today with hindsight that I never really knew it at all - at least not the Machiavellian seething underbelly side of the business, is changing and mutating so rapidly today that not even the suits can keep up.

It was about chart position once, album sales, then it was CDs, MP3s, Youtube, Spotify.... Even I find it hard to keep up anymore and that's how it should be. Tomorrow belongs to the next generation of dreamers, schemers and creatives like me and they are all out there somewhere, doing just what I was doing all those years ago, except this time the technology is all in their hands - they are free to do just what they want and free from the tyranny of the record labels who will steal their souls and sign them away for ever. I can't wait to see what the future looks like.

I know one thing though. The Starship Sputnik will live forever, immortalised in cyberspace where it truly belongs..... And I'm really proud of that.



Tony James
Summer 2012

[One last thing...]

One Last Thing...

As I look back at all the video footage, the laughing, confident faces of the band, it makes me realise just what a great band it was that we created and what great times those were. The best Rock and Roll times of our lives.

At those final shows in Brazil, in huge auditoriums, everyone had a real command of their instruments and the music. They had all truly learnt to play brilliantly.

I hope that everyone in Sigue Sigue Sputnik at that time will look back at the music, the friendships and the dreams that became reality with the same fondness and positivity that I do. I hope they hold that unique moment special in their hearts and love it for what it was - something extraordinary, something that happens just once in a lifetime. I don't regret one moment of that time and I send my love to everyone involved in the whole of the ride - whatever else it was, and whatever it turned out to be - it was the time of our lives and you were all absolutely a part of it.